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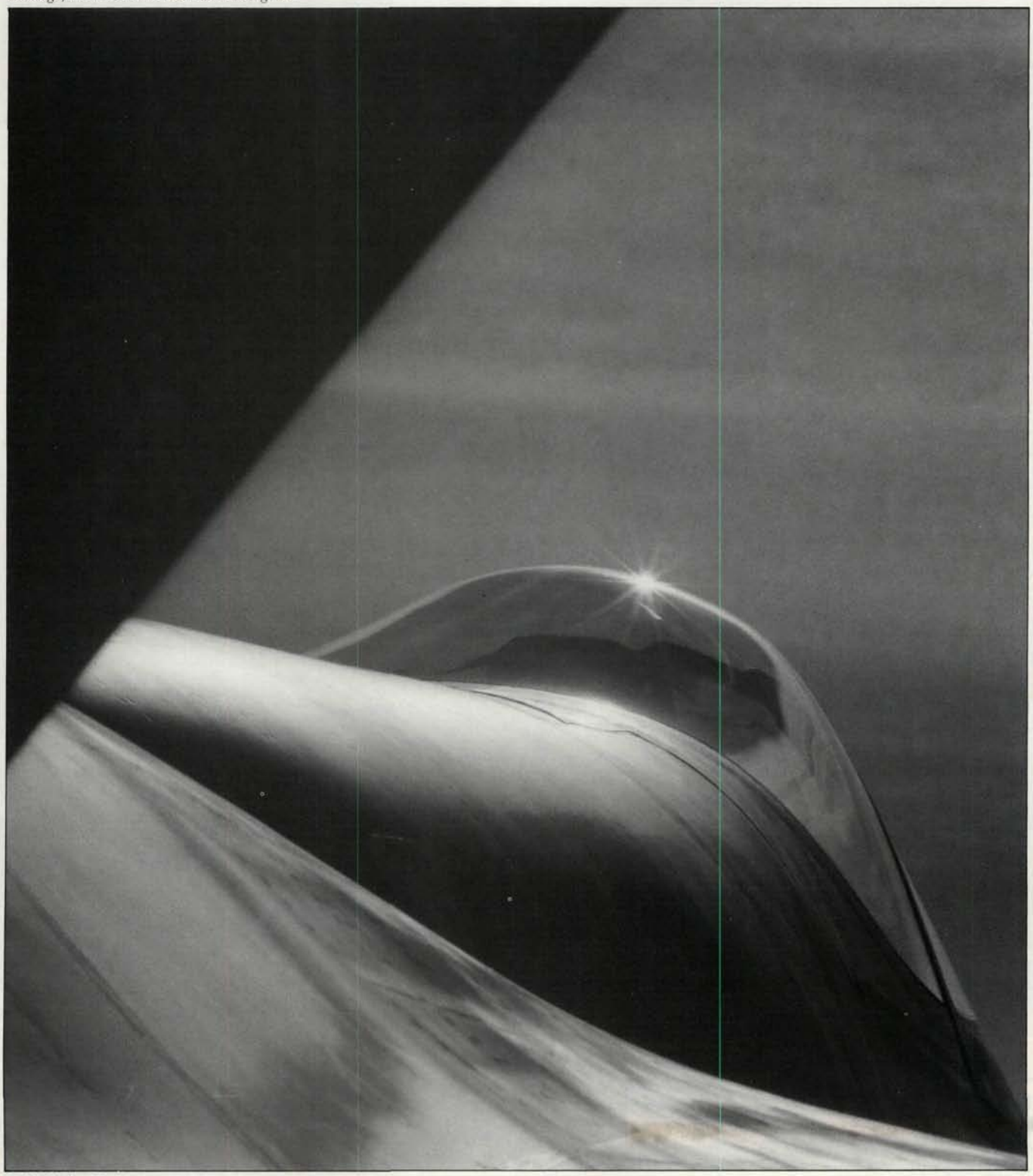

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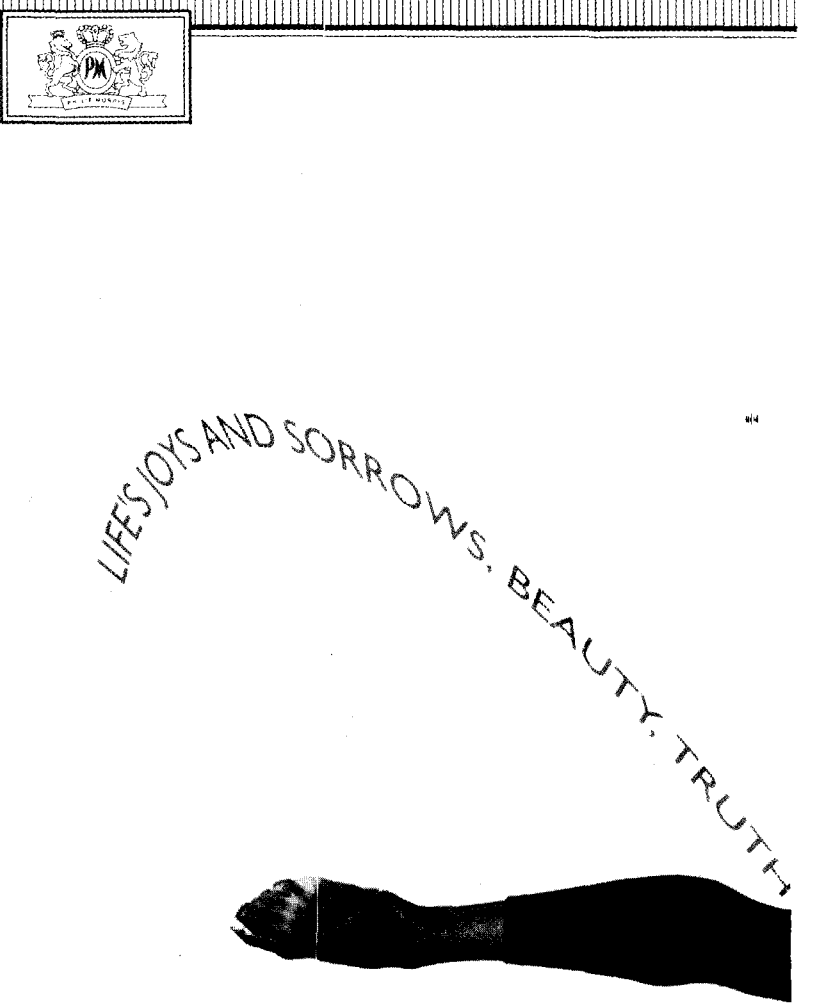

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FROM WASHINGTON

Dead Iraqis

Maybe I missed something, but the first news report I read discussing the question of Iraqi casualties in Operation Desert Storm appeared in *The Washington Post* on February 18, the thirty-fourth day of the war. The figures it cited, unconfirmed, were 20,000 dead and 60,000 wounded up to that point. It added that "wounded soldiers were dying for lack of treatment amid conditions that recalled the American Civil War." The story was on page seven.

As of this writing, the Persian Gulf war still lacks its Mathew Brady to record the acres of bodies incinerated in their bunkers or buried alive in the sand. But 80,000 losses by mid-February hardly seems unrealistic. After all, there has been no effort to minimize Iraqi *military*, as opposed to civilian, casualties. Quite the opposite. By the time the Iraqi army is forced out of Kuwait, said General Thomas Kelly on February 23, "there won't be many of them left."

Obviously a wartime enemy cannot be allowed to hold his own soldiers as hostages. War means killing soldiers, and concern for our own troops dictates that it be done efficiently. America has clearly decided the cost was worth the benefit. But the way we have shielded ourselves from the cost being imposed on Iraqi soldiers—human beings, after all, mostly draftees, with families—is unpleasant.

Like everything else about this war, the spread of callousness on the home front happened at lightning speed. This is partly due to what a *Post* editorial called "the Nintendo effect": those tapes of exploding buildings that made bombing seem like a video game. It is partly because of the remarkably few American casualties. The other week I found myself saying, "When the war starts . . . ," meaning the ground war, at a time when American bombs were undoubtedly killing thousands of Arabs a day. There's a lot we still don't know—partly of necessity and partly because our leaders have kept it from us. But there is also a blinding moral self-righteousness that keeps us from seeing what's going on before our eyes.

A neat little example of this process concerns a device known as a "fuel-air explosive" (FAE). The FAE works, in essence, by filling a wide area with combustible gas, then lighting a match. A search through Nexis, the computerized news media database, reveals that the FAE entered public discussion as something the *Iraqis* might have. It was described as a terror weapon: an "exotic explosive" with "a devastating blast similar to a small nuclear explosion over an area several miles wide." "Unlike Iraq's arsenal of chemical and biological weapons," reported *The Los Angeles Times* on October 5, "there is no ready defense against" the FAE—which, by the way, "the United States does not have in its arsenal."

The FAE soon acquired the moniker "the poor man's nuclear weapon." The Reagan and Bush administrations stood accused of encouraging the transfer of technology for it, back when Iraq was our pal. An *LA Times* article on January 15, about potential casualties, said the allies were prepared for "massive burns" from "powerful Iraqi fuel-air explosives." *The New York Times* reported on January 24, "Hussein might be planning to use an even more horrific weapon, never before employed in combat, known as the fuel air bomb, which spreads a circle of fire."

A *Boston Globe* article on February 6 cited a U.S. War College study suggesting that Iraq might have used fuel-air weapons, and not chemical weapons, during the Iran-Iraq war—the implication being that there was little to choose between them. This article also said, "Some independent analysts believe that both the U.S. and Iraqi arsenals include" FAEs—the first hint that the good guys might have this weapon—although "it is not clear whether Iraq or any other nation has succeeded in perfecting them."

Clarity was not long in coming. The *LA Times* reported on February 7 that "the United States stockpiled exotic fuel-air weapons" in Saudi Arabia for use against Iraq. And what's the big deal? Although some "experts call them 'the poor man's nuclear weapon . . . ,' others say the bombs pack about as much punch as conventional explosives." The poor-mouthing continued in *The Wall Street Journal* on February 8, which reported that FAEs "are derided by U.S. military technologists, despite outside talk they could be 'superbomb' response to any Iraqi chemical attack."

The notion that FAEs are so horrible that they would be used only in response to a chemical attack lasted less than a week. *The Washington Post* on February 16: "U.S. warplanes have begun dropping . . . fuel-air explosives on Iraqi positions to 'experiment' with their effectiveness in clearing mine fields or blasting away berms and clusters of trucks and armored vehicles." *The New York Times* ran a diagram the same day titled, "How Fuel-Air Explosives Work," implying that their only function and effect is to clear mine fields. The explosion creates pressure that sets off the mines, "clearing an area large enough for a helicopter to land," the *Times* helpfully explained.

On February 17 the *Post*, having repeated that FAEs are "employed against mines and light equipment such as trucks," added: "Their fireballs also suck away oxygen, which specialists pointed out could lead to asphyxiation of Iraqi troops hiding in bunkers." An *LA Times* editorial the same day, discussing possible use of nuclear weapons, noted that they may "be no more inhumane than, say, fuel-air explosives, which kill by sucking every particle of oxygen from the air."

But in general, the papers continued to play down the fact that FAEs, former terror weapon, actually kill people. The *LA Times* on February 17 (same day as its frank editorial) reported that FAEs "clear mine fields, pack down sand to ease movement of allied armored columns, and further terrorize and demoralize the lightly armed Iraqi infantry troops. . . ." A *USA Today* chart February 19 explained that FAEs create a "pressure wave that detonates mines, destroys buildings, aircraft."

On February 23, the day the ground war started, *The Washington Post* reported about this weapon that at first we didn't have, then would never use except against a chemical attack, then were using to clear mine fields and pack down sand: "All of the front-line Iraqi troops have been subjected to extensive bombardment, including many detonations of 10,000-pound BLU-82 bombs, containing fuel-air explosives." But by then, who cared?

We've been kidding ourselves about Iraqi civilian casualties too. Polls show that most Americans believe that Saddam Hussein purposely set up those families who died in the mistaken bunker attack. He might have, but there's no evidence. The belief stems from a refusal to acknowledge the costs of war. Many more than 400 civilians will have died before the effects of Operation Desert Storm are over. Baghdad is a city of 4 million people without water, electricity, sewers. Medicines are scant. Doctors operate by candlelight. Remember those Kuwaiti babies reportedly ripped from their incubators and left to die by Iraqi soldiers? Well, there have probably been no operating incubators for several weeks in Baghdad.

The moral? Not necessarily that the war was a mistake, although I think it was. For the moment, as America revels in victory, let's just leave it at this: don't be so damned smug.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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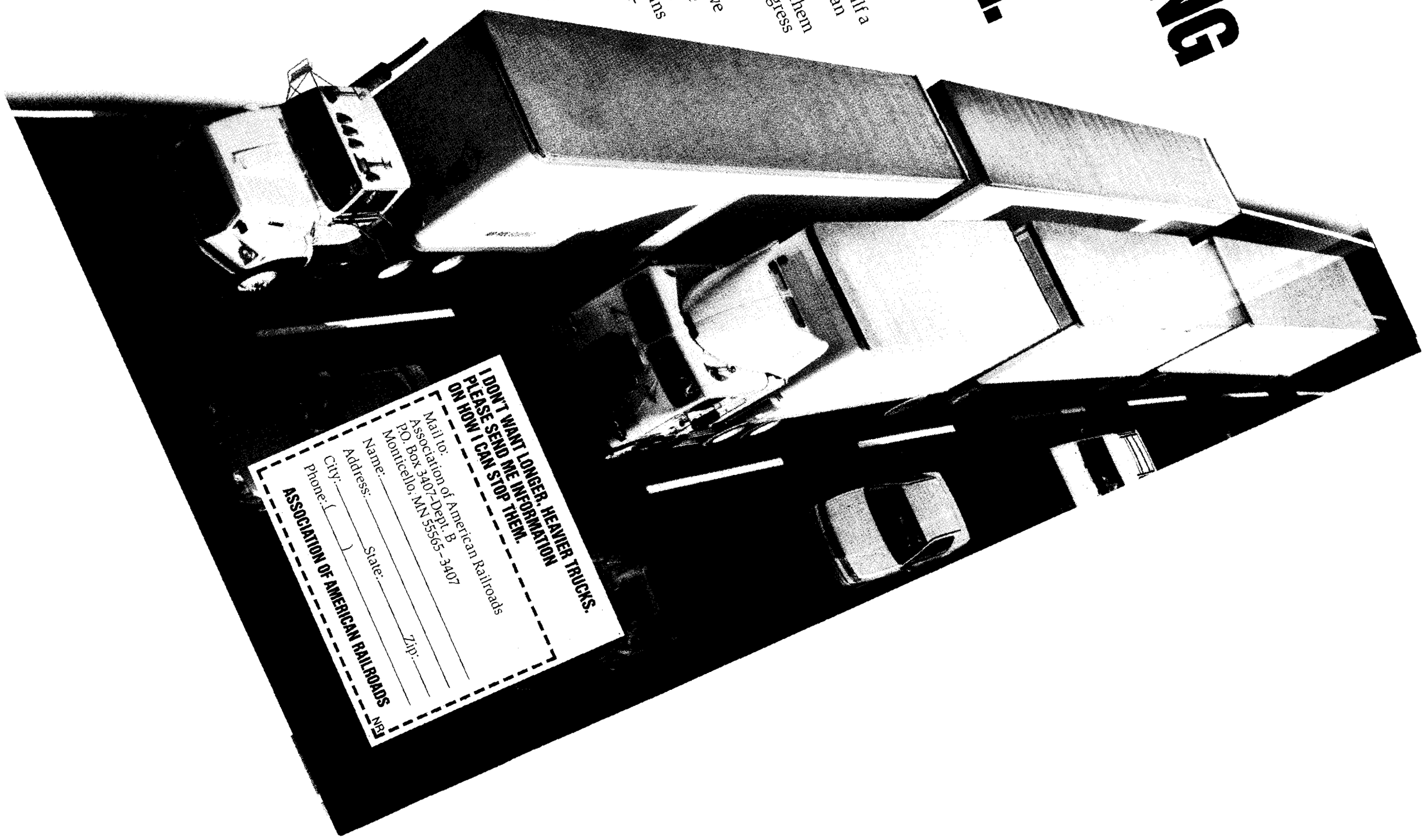

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CORRESPONDENCE

Private parts

To the editors:

In "The Dustbin of Economics" (February 25) Robert Kuttner endorses the establishment of giant mutual funds as the most promising approach to privatization in Eastern Europe. Mr. Kuttner sees the novel scheme as an opportunity to "realize something of the original promise of socialism" by ensuring widespread ownership of former state-owned enterprises among the citizens of the fledgling democracies of Eastern Europe.

The mutual fund proposal is a theoretical construct much like Lange's model of market socialism: it panders to our sense of distributive justice and thrives in the rarefied atmosphere of intellectual construct. In practice, however, it would be disastrous.

In distributing shares of state-owned enterprises to all citizens, the scheme solves nothing more than the question of who owns what. It is bunk to claim that it solves the problem of valuation of enterprises: in a market economy, an enterprise cannot function without an accurate assessment of its debts, its level of capitalization, and a direct valuation of its assets. Distributing shares solves none of this.

What is most disturbing, however, is that the funds would have to be run by the same Platonic philosopher kings who ran the Central Planning Board in Lange's market socialism. That is a sure prescription for the reassertion of entrenched bureaucratic and nomenklatura interests.

Let us not succumb to the inviting familiarity of grand plans that promise quick solutions. The reconstruction of Eastern Europe will take foot soldiers in the battlefield, slogging through financial statements, valuing assets, recapitalizing and converting enterprises into joint stock companies. Tedious and very unsexy.

This points to the great fallacy of "shock" therapy. Prices can be freed and subsidies can be cut and currencies can be made convertible overnight. But the financial and legal know-how to restructure enterprises and the infrastructure necessary to support a market economy will not emerge *sua sponte* from the ashes of socialism.

NICHOLAS A. VARDY
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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Final solution

To the editors:

In contrast to most other print media that seem to take special delight in Israel-bashing, TNR has (almost) always given fair treatment to the state of Israel. In your editorial "Terms of Internment" (February 25), however, you display certain blind spots. For one, you describe Sari Nuseibeh as a "proven moderate in the Palestinian world, politically and temperamentally." That is certainly an idiosyncratic statement, not borne out by that man's record of agitation and subversion.

You then proceed to describe as a "gratuitous slap, not only at [Israel's] allies in the international community, but also the majority of Jews in Israel and America," the possible "transfer" of the Arabs residing in Judea and Samaria to a neighboring country, possibly Jordan. I don't know what soundings you have taken to get your sentiments of American Jewry, but I can assure you that quite a few of us are beginning to believe that that might not be such a bad idea.

After all, population transfers have been widely practiced throughout history. In 1923 Greece and Turkey agreed to the resettlement of 2 million Greeks and 800,000 Turks. In 1945 the resettlement of 3 million Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia to a war-ravaged Germany was arranged. Following the collapse of its North African empire, France accepted close to 1.5 million people. More than 12 million Muslims and Hindus were exchanged between India and Pakistan.

The Jews in Israel have no place else to go. The so-called Palestinians, who seem to chafe so intolerably under Israeli administration, could, if life becomes unbearable to them, move or be moved to neighboring Jordan or to Syria. This piece of surgery might stop one of the most intractable problems of the century once and for all.

GERARDO JOFFE
San Francisco, California

War cries

To the editors:

What better way to defend the shallow and vacuous policies that led us into war than to launch a shallow and vacuous barb at war opponents? In "Means of Dissent" (February 25) Jacob Weisberg purported to analyze the peace movement, but instead he went foraging in

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MARCH 18, 1991

THE END OF THE END

Those who doubted George Bush's nerve and geopolitical acumen owe him something of an apology. That includes us. We thought it unlikely that Mr. Bush would be able to persuade the United Nations of the resolutions successively passed against the Iraqi regime. We were skeptical he would provide the force necessary to see the policy against Saddam Hussein to a successful conclusion. We did not believe that he would carry the country with him successfully, or that he would outmaneuver his critics in Congress. We suspected that his constant reiteration of the need to liberate Kuwait would blind him to the more pressing need to neutralize the threat that Saddam posed to the entire Middle East. And we feared that, presented with wily Soviet proposals to rescue the Iraqi regime from collapse, the president's mystifying loyalty to Mikhail Gorbachev would cause him to balk at the final hurdle. We were wrong each time.

We were not, however, as wrong as the president's critics. As the war against Iraq reaches its denouement, it is only appropriate to remember some of the fallacies that have been exposed over the last few months. The argument that economic sanctions alone would have secured the liberation of Kuwait is now surely in tatters—and not simply because military action has succeeded in the task. If, even as invading armies reclaim Kuwait, and after more than a month of intensive bombing of Iraq itself, Saddam has still not publicly retracted his claim to Kuwait, what chance was there that after a year of mere sanctions—or two years—he would have been forced to the same position? The fashionable idea that no war against an Arab state could marshal Arab support has also collapsed, as Egyptians, Saudis, and even Syrians poured into Kuwait. So too has the patronizing notion that defeat is impossible in Arab culture, that Saddam could turn even a rout into a form of glorious martyrdom. The havoc that he has unleashed upon his own country and the entire region, together with his own ignominious retreat, is evident to everyone with eyes to see. It is clear above all to the people he has terrorized in his own country for so long.

With victory in sight, the same people who initially urged against the military option, and then urged that it be indefinitely delayed, and then urged that it be confined permanently to the air, now argue that there is more danger in overreaching than in ensuring that the Iraqi regime is destroyed. We hope that the president is no more swayed by these voices than he has been all along. The destruction of the lethal military capacity of Iraq is not an optional war aim; it is the point of the entire exercise. The ground war strategy reflected exactly this understanding, which is why the allies cut off the retreat of Saddam's Republican Guards. To allow the Iraqi army to regroup and to retreat largely intact, as the Soviet plan envisaged and as the president's domestic critics clamored for, would have been not merely to have compromised victory but to have invited a form of defeat.

This was not Beirut in 1982, when PLO terrorists retreated through an Israeli cease-fire, shooting their rifles exultantly in the air. The president has shrewdly judged that the humiliation of Saddam Hussein is not a superfluous act of war euphoria, but an integral part of a strategy that can encourage Saddam's removal from power and ensure that neither his prestige nor his regime rises from the ashes. Our war aims should now be concentrated on Iraq, on securing its compliance with every U.N. resolution applying to it, on encouraging its citizens to take the future of their devastated country in their own hands.

There will be no "new world order" in the Middle

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East. Without Saddam there is merely, perhaps, the chance of less chronic disorder. Almost everybody's reflex is to believe that the United States should now seize the opportunity to persuade the Arab regimes that are indebted to us for protecting them from Iraq—the Saudis and the other Gulf states—to start talking to Israel and to end the state of war between them and the Israelis. It is not our reflex. We naturally hope this will come about. We are merely skeptical of a new dawn in a region that has just experienced another cyclical cataclysm. And the danger in overambitious schemes to reorder the balance of power in the region, to bolster a post-Saddam Iraq (if it emerges), to jockey between Syrians and Egyptians, Palestinians and Israelis, and the like, is that the central focus on Iraq will be lost. Its story is not over. There is no reason, as far as we can see, why those states that have suffered from Iraq's aggression, and sacrificed to repel it, should not have their say in the future of the country. Do we expect the Turks, the Kurds, the Kuwaitis, the Saudis, even the Israelis, magnanimously to forgo a share of the spoils of victory? Managing these claims will be business enough for the United States in the immediate future.

If we cannot expect the Turks to be particularly magnanimous in the aftermath of victory, can we expect any more of the Republicans? Now, of course, congressional Democrats are vying with each other to support the engagement. Ron Brown, chairman of the Democratic Party, was at least marginally more consistent: "I continue to believe," he told *The New York Times*, "that the fact that the war appears to be ending quickly and decisively helps us get back to a domestic agenda." The truth is, of course, that this sudden, almost American casualty-free, immensely popular military victory in the Persian Gulf is most partisan Democrats' private nightmare. Their instinctive shrinking from the conflict from the beginning will merely confirm in retrospect the public's view that the party is ill-equipped to wield presidential power. We merely hope that George Bush's now sky-high ratings—despite a still execrable domestic record—will persuade more Democrats that they cannot eschew a realistic foreign policy and hope to regain the White House. We certainly believe that a candidate's position on the Gulf war before it started is a legitimate factor for consideration in selecting a Democratic candidate in 1992.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Of all outstanding foreign policy concerns in the wake of the war, the most obvious—and most tractable—is the relationship with the Soviet Union. When Mikhail Gorbachev tried to save Saddam's face and military machine, he was not acting as a member of a U.N. coalition but as the head of an independent power pursuing its own interests in the Middle East. Mr. Gorbachev wanted to curry favor with pro-Saddam Arabs, to retain Moscow's long association with the Iraqi military, and to enhance his prestige as a peacemaker. Because Mr. Bush did not want Mr. Gorbachev to side formally with Saddam, he was polite about dismissing the Soviet initiatives.

We understand the politeness, in a critical moment of war. We merely hope that it is not an integral part of administration policy toward the Soviet Union. As with our ostensible new ally Syria, the United States should treat the Soviet Union as a Mideast partner strictly to the extent that Mr. Gorbachev's actions are in line with our own. Once the war is over, the need the administration felt to placate the Kremlin will lose much of whatever cogency it once had. To give the Soviets a central role in postwar Middle East diplomacy (as Secretary of State James Baker agreed to do in his February communiqué with Soviet Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh) would merely create an opportunity for sabotage.

It's possible, of course, that President Bush knows better than to expect the best from the likes of Messrs. Gorbachev and Assad. On the other hand, prior to August 2, he thought he could get along with Saddam

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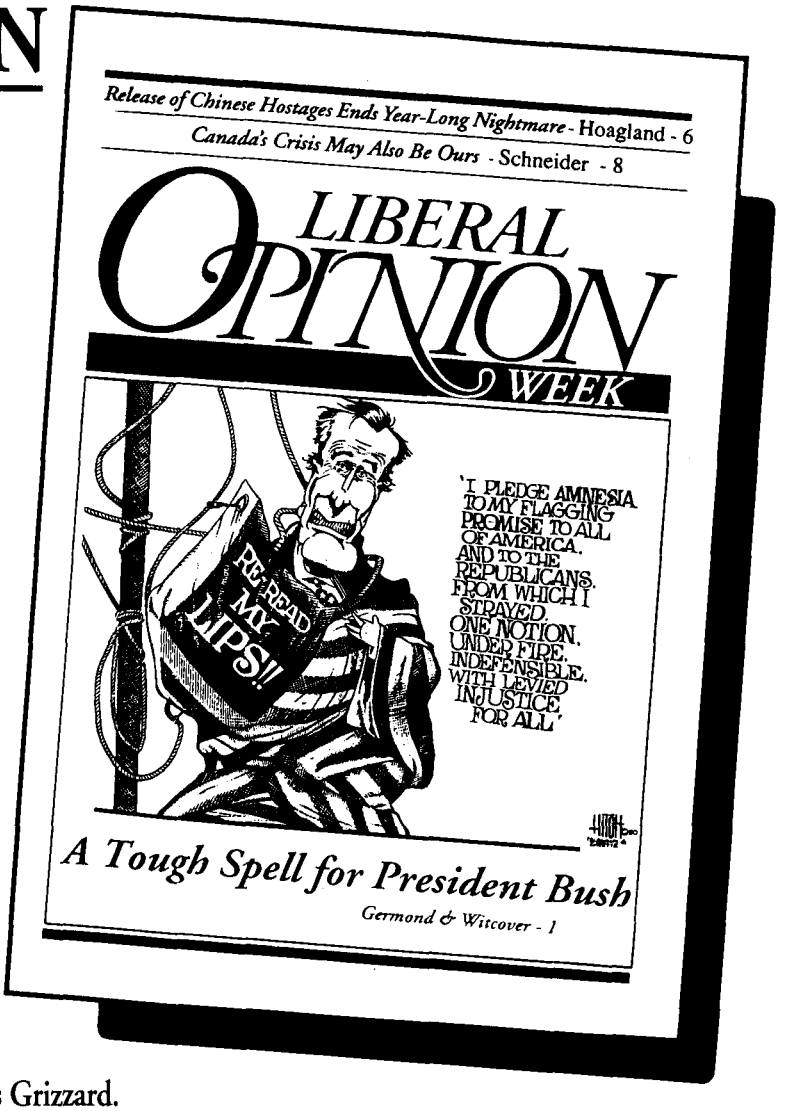
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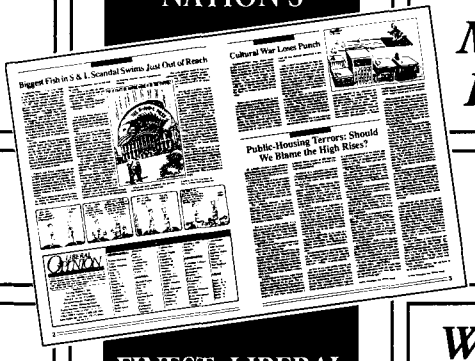
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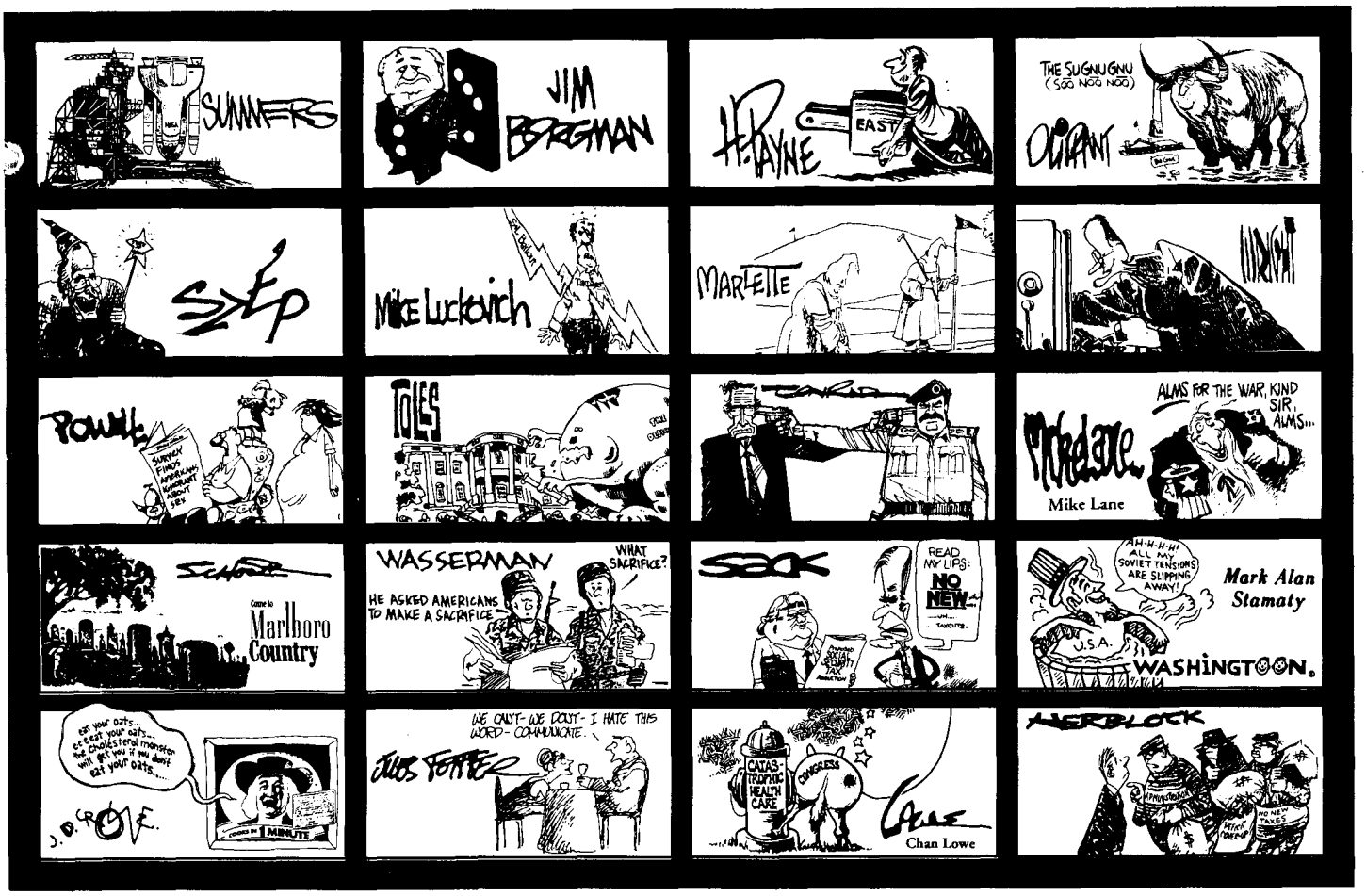

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Hussein. It's also possible that, in his brief, successful engagement with the labyrinth of the Middle East, George Bush has absorbed more realism about the chances for a breakthrough there than much of the State Department. The great imponderable of the post-war period will be whether the George Bush of the Gulf war—skeptical, deft, and resolute—will disappear once the hard task of winning the peace is upon him. We fear that he will. We merely hope that we will continue to be proved wrong.

NOTEBOOK

GIVE US A CALL: Burning with indignation (or in transports of concurrence) after reading the above? To register your agreement or disagreement with our position that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime should be a central war aim of the United States, call 1-900-726-6671.

RED CRAYON SUPPLIED: Parents of young children, please note the publication of *My Desert Storm Workbook: First Aid for Feelings*, from the National Childhood Grief Institute (Workman, $5.95). The book contains drawings and exercises designed to help kids cope with their fears about the Persian Gulf war. Our favorites: a large blank page with the instruction: "This is how I would end the war . . ." and "Things I think about: I think the war is happening because . . ." No doubt six-year-old disquisitions about U.S. energy policy and third-grade assessments of the Primakov peace plan will prove vital instruments in overcoming childhood neurosis. But the likelier need will be calming gung-ho kiddies' war euphoria. Perhaps Workman will collaborate with the National Childhood Glee Institute on a sequel: *My Second Desert Storm Workbook: Why don't I feel sad?*

CAPITAL GAINS, ROUND 96: Suppose you owned a few shares of stock in Company X, worth $10 a share. You wish they were worth $15 a share. So you have a brainstorm: you announce that next week you are going to give $5 a share to every holder of Company X stock. Sure enough, your own shares are now salable for $15. Of course, after you pay off every shareholder you will be out far more than you gained. Doesn't make much sense, does it? Yet a version of this logic is the latest argument for a capital gains tax cut, popping up in places like *The Wall Street Journal*'s editorial page. A capital gains break, it's said, will shore up the banking system and reduce the cost of the S&L bailout. How? By increasing the value of real estate, in which failed S&Ls and shaky banks are heavily invested. "A lower tax rate would boost the value of assets by increasing the expected value of future after-tax proceeds," explains the Heritage Foundation. It's perfectly true that tax breaks for real estate get capitalized into higher prices. But this is hardly a good argument for a capital gains break. The higher prices simply equal the present value of the future tax saving. They are, in essence, a transfer from the government (i.e., taxpayers in general) to present owners of real estate. It is nonsensical to say that this is a good deal for the government because, as the guarantor of failed S&Ls and potential guarantor of failed banks, it is the beneficial owner of some small fraction of all real estate. The case for a capital gains break is supposed to be that it will stimulate the production of new wealth. The fact that it would increase the value of already existing assets is neither here nor there. And the fact that so much of the benefit would go to owners of land—which cannot be created in any event—is an argument against it, not for it.

BISHOP'S PAWN:
". . . former Grenadian ruler Maurice Bishop, leader of the Communist New Jewel Movement . . ." —THE NEW REPUBLIC, March 11, page 14 (article criticizing Representative Ron Dellums's associations with Bishop)

". . . Maurice Bishop, the popular, charismatic, legitimate prime minister . . ." —same magazine, same issue, page 24 (article celebrating General H. Norman Schwarzkopf's role in American invasion that overthrew man who overthrew Bishop)

EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE: Ordinary people who testify in court have to swear to tell the truth. Not so the attorney general. Called to the witness stand last week in the drug trial of his former aide Henry Barr, Richard Thornburgh was allowed to skip the oath as a matter of professional "courtesy." So if the nation's top law enforcement official was lying when he said he didn't know his ex-assistant used cocaine, he can't be prosecuted for perjury. While we're at it, why not exempt the head of the IRS from paying taxes?

TV LISTING: As we're no longer the only ones to notice, Peter Jennings has special feelings about the Middle East, and about the Jewish parcel of it. As goes the anchorman, so, now and then, goes the network. The other night ABC broadcast the image of an audience of Israelis in a Jerusalem concert hall listening to Isaac Stern's violin in their gas masks. We were thunderstruck not only by this extraordinary image, which is the very image of a determination to remain civilized in the most uncivilized of circumstances, but also by the commentary that accompanied it. Dean Reynolds, Mr. Jennings's man in Jerusalem, had this to say: "Having paid for a performance by violinist Isaac Stern, they were determined to get their money's worth." Oops. Another tagline like that and people may begin to wonder what the A in ABC stands for.

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WALESA WATCH: It seems Polish politicians haven't yet broken the habit of trying to control the news media. During the Mazowiecki prime ministership, Polish state television displayed a pronounced anti-Walesa bias. Now guess what? A news program, "Obserwator" (Observer), whose staff was allegedly more sympathetic to Mr. Mazowiecki than to Mr. Walesa, just got canceled. The cancellation came after a report on a demo against President Walesa by coal miners. The main television news ignored the protest, because, according to one official, it is trying to persuade the strikers to drop the protest. Lech Walesa, censoring strikebreaker. What a difference an election makes.

THE FEDERAL YOKE: It may not make much practical difference that the District of Columbia has abandoned its law to hold the manufacturers, importers, and dealers of military assault weapons "strictly liable" for the deaths they cause: the law was probably unenforceable anyway. But the way D.C.'s new mayor, Sharon Pratt Dixon, was blackmailed into retreating on the measure was ugly. Virginia Representative Thomas Bliley, a water carrier for the NRA who happens to be the ranking Republican on the House D.C. committee, threatened to hold up Mayor Dixon's request for $100 million in emergency federal aid if she let the anti-gun law stand. Ms. Dixon, forced to get the city council to repeal the law, can be forgiven for bowing to circumstances. Not so Mr. Bliley and his fellow Republicans on the committee.

GROUND CONTROL TO MICHAEL SLOAN: Back in June 1986 we received a letter from one Michael C. Sloan, a 22-year-old graduate of a "major, private university" seeking career advice. We answered him with a symposium titled "What Should Michael Do?" The recommendations ran from teaching (Ann Hulbert) to medicine (Charles Krauthammer) to investment banking (Michael Kinsley) to the ministry (Fred Barnes). TNR's editors were unanimous about only one thing: Michael should not go to law school. Now we've heard from Bonnie Edwards, a reader in Newton Center, Massachusetts, who reminds us about the symposium and asks whose advice Michael finally took. We've been wondering ourselves, but unfortunately have been unable to track him down. So Michael, if you're out there, please write and bring us up to date—even if you're now practicing personal injury law. We promise not to run another symposium about whether you made the right choice.

HURRAY: It is our pleasure to announce the publication of *The End of Laissez Faire: National Purpose and the Global Economy After the Cold War* (Knopf) by Robert Kuttner, TNR's economics correspondent. ●

Nicaragua's struggle continues.

MURDER IN MANAGUA

By James LeMoyne

MIAMI

Oliver North sat in a side chapel. The men from the CIA stood discreetly in the back, towering over the stubby Nicaraguan mourners who filled the rest of the pews, fervently crossing themselves during the funeral mass for Nicaraguan guerrilla commander Enrique Bermudez. His cadaver, pierced by a bullet through the head, rested in its shiny wood coffin at the front of St. Catherine of Siena church. Bermudez had been murdered in Managua, apparently by a highly professional assassin using a silenced weapon. But he was being buried near his home in Miami, the capital of Nicaraguan exile and de facto headquarters of the anti-Sandinista rebel movement.

Most of the American paladins of that crusade came to bury Bermudez. North and the CIA men were joined by Felix Rodriguez, the former CIA paramilitary fighter who, when he wasn't killing Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador, busied himself ferrying tons of supplies to the Nicaraguan rebels. Retired General John Singlaub also came to pay last respects and shake hands with wiry former Nicaraguan guerrillas he advised. There were others, with false names or no names at all, who first convinced the Argentine army to finance the rebels in 1980, before the CIA was fully on board.

Bermudez had returned to Nicaragua under the terms of a general amnesty and peace agreement to join those now sparring over the future of Nicaragua. His friends say he received a late-night phone call telling him an American Embassy official wanted to see him. He drove to the downtown Intercontinental Hotel, where a waiting assassin gunned him down. Former rebels and, in private, several Nicaraguan government officials blame the Sandinistas for the efficient killing. Sandinistas contend that it was the result of feuding among former rebels. The truth may never be known. What is known is that murder has replaced argument at a very delicate moment of transition in Nicaragua. Bermudez's killing offered a bloody baptism for the first anniversary of the election of President Violeta de Chamorro, who last year swept the Sandinistas from office but not from power.

Bermudez himself was not yet a major political player, but he had aspirations. Among the most committed opponents of the Sandinistas, he was a former officer in the defeated National Guard whom the CIA strongly backed as manager of the rebel movement. I met him several

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times between 1983 and '88 at his border bases near Yamales, Honduras, where he stolidly pursued the overthrow of the Sandinistas. Starting from paramilitary hit squads, his command jump-started into a full-blown insurrection of the peasants of northern Nicaragua, who rose to fight a Sandinista state they found intolerably oppressive. In the end Bermudez proved more enduring than his many critics ever predicted.

The Sandinistas lost the elections last year, but promising to "rule from below," they maneuvered the government into a power-sharing pact of the sort made popular by the Guatemalan and Argentine armies. The elected Chamorro government gets to call itself the government. But the Sandinistas control the army; the police; the secret police; the courts; most public sector trade unions; many state enterprises; and the cars, houses, factories, and farms they looted, stole, and occupied in their decade-long squandering of Nicaragua's resources. This cozy arrangement is designed as much to safeguard the material well-being of the new elites as to ensure that the country does not descend again into open civil war.

The Sandinistas have spared no effort to woo those former rebel commanders who have the talent and following to pose a serious threat to them. Defense Minister Humberto Ortega strongly supported the hiring of two top rebel leaders, "Comandante Franklin" and "Comandante Ruben." They now work for the government with salaries and cars. "Mack," a former rebel commander and National Guard sergeant known for his human rights abuses, is now "special adviser" to the Sandinista intelligence service, according to two former rebels.

But, stubborn as always, Bermudez would not play along, breaking the unspoken rule that no one may challenge the power-sharing pact between the new elite that now runs Nicaragua: the officially ruling Chamorro clan and the still-powerful coterie of Sandinista commanders, led by Humberto Ortega. No one outside the Chamorro and Ortega circles will have real power in Nicaragua and very few will gain wealth. This is "vanguard" politics as practiced in most of Central America.

In early February Bermudez met with ex-rebel commanders who are tired of unfulfilled promises from the Sandinistas and the government. They want land. They want the local armed Sandinista militants to be forced to relinquish their weapons. And they want Sandinista *comandantes* stripped of power in accord with their overwhelming repudiation at the polls by the Nicaraguan people. Bermudez agreed to become the political representative of these disarmed but still dissident peasants—the only group still feared by the Sandinistas or by the government. Bermudez had safely spent more than two months in Nicaragua, but not long after he agreed to speak for the former rebels, someone shot him in the head.

Deal-making and threats, family contacts and elite rule, constitute the traditional political culture of Nicaragua. And it is to this that the country's rulers have instinctively turned after a decade of fatal utopianism and more than 70,000 deaths. The Sandinistas have informed Chamorro that she either shares power or faces civil war. "We can rule more easily in her shadow than in the open," Humberto Ortega recently told a close associate. Chamorro, tired of bloodshed, has chosen to cooperate. Her advisers reckon that in time they can outmaneuver and so weaken the Sandinistas that the *comandantes* will never regain power. The Sandinistas reckon they can block the government on any measure of importance, sapping its popular support. They will then use their hefty legislative representation, backed by violent threats, to force the government into further concessions.

It's a rough game. The Sandinistas have led crippling strikes, killed several opponents, and dived headlong into the open pursuit of corruption and dollars. Former Sandinista tribunes of "the people" such as Humberto and Daniel Ortega, Bayardo Arce, Jaime Wheelock, and countless others live in stolen mansions, drive big cars and jeeps, flash wads of bills, and generally act like petty hoods. Before they excused such excesses as the trappings of office. Now their appetite is readily apparent.

A few months ago Humberto Ortega had a hard time explaining why for the second time in a year the Sandinistas were caught sending anti-aircraft missiles to El Salvador's guerrillas. Three subordinates confessed to selling the missiles, and they are reportedly going to be punished, but most people believe that Ortega was involved. That suspicion was reinforced when the Honduran army intercepted a weapons shipment last week from Nicaragua. The arms courier reportedly said the arms were provided to him by the Nicaraguan army for leftist guerrillas in Honduras. The Sandinistas also have been unable to explain away several mass graves in the countryside that local peasants charge are the killing fields of Sandinista death squads.

Now Ortega is being pressed to answer charges that his bodyguards carried out another murder last October. Jean Paul Genie, 16 years old, made the mistake of trying to pass a convoy of Jeep "Renegades," a vehicle used almost exclusively by the Ortega brothers. Soldiers in the Jeeps opened fire, killing the errant teenager. Ortega denies responsibility, but it smells very bad. The chief police investigator in the case has been murdered, and witnesses and family members are accusing Ortega, who appears well on his way to becoming the Godfather of Nicaragua.

In the midst of such mayhem, Chamorro and her government show only tentative signs of life. She has set a new record for nepotism in appointing her extended family to patronage posts, in part because they appear to be the only people she trusts. And she and her advisers admit privately to fearing the Sandinistas.

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They have shown no interest in seriously investigating the Genie murder, or the evidence of mass graves. The killing of Bermudez also worries them. "If we investigate, and find the Sandinistas did it, then what do we do?" said a senior government official.

A major test for the government will come soon, when it begins to privatize most state-run businesses, a great many of them in the hands of the Sandinistas. Since the *comandantes* do not produce anything in the economy, this step will deprive them of income and part of their power bases. Government officials describe the action as the first move in what they call a gradual effort to diminish Sandinista power. They say that is all they can do, because the alternative would be bloodshed. It promises to be a difficult move.

As Enrique Bermudez was eased into his grave in a Miami cemetery, the keening notes of the anthem of much of Central America filled the air—the cries of grieving women wailing at a graveside. At the church, Oliver North hugged several of the mourners. Now, at the grave, the CIA men quietly walked away as Nicaraguans shouted: "Justice! Justice!" followed by "Death to Sandinismo! Death to Chamorrismo!" They were Nicaraguans, though, and they know their country's history: there will be no justice, but death is easy to find. It is now apparent that Nicaraguans, who died by the tens of thousands fighting for a more democratic society, face further years of struggle. One year after her election, Chamorro is still simply trying to maintain the imperfect peace that ended open civil war. She has barely begun the process of crafting a true democracy, and the Sandinistas show no signs of making her job easier.

JAMES LEMOYNE has reported on Central America for several years and is writing a book about the region.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

THE UNWIMP

By Fred Barnes

Of all Saddam Hussein's weird denunciations of President Bush, my favorite came during a January 29 interview with Peter Arnett of CNN. The bombing of Baghdad and military targets all over Iraq had begun two weeks earlier. Saddam was brimming with moral outrage. Where did Bush start the bombing on January 16? he asked. He answered himself. "No attack was launched against the armed forces in our 19th province" (you know, Kuwait), Saddam said. "But he started his attack against Baghdad." Bush is a liar, Saddam insisted, but "these facts are undeniable. President Bush cannot deny that he ordered his attack to be launched here against this part and not against our armed forces in Kuwait."

Bush didn't deny it at all. He announced the bombing of Baghdad. But that's not the point. What's striking about Saddam's indignation is its sincerity. (Administration officials, by the way, agree with me that Saddam was truly steamed.) He actually thought Bush was going to attack only Iraqi forces in Kuwait. Baghdad and the rest of Iraq would be safe, like China north of the Yalu in the Korean War. This was a stupendous misreading of Bush. OK, so Bush had trouble fathoming Saddam, the Arab mind, etc. But that failure is small compared with Saddam's boneheadedness about Bush. At every juncture in the Persian Gulf war, Saddam sold Bush short. Maybe he'd read some of the wimp stories in the American press. Then he was surprised by Bush's daring and diplomacy.

"To be fair," says a White House official, "who could have predicted Bush would act like this after a career of compromise? Bush went nuts. It's amazing." He led an apprehensive country into a war in which catastrophe after catastrophe was predicted by his political opponents and the press. None happened. American forces fought effectively and their weapons worked. It wasn't another Vietnam. There weren't high casualties. Air power did prove decisive. The land war was mainly a mopping up operation. The Arab uprising against the United States and Arab governments who sided with Bush (Egypt, Saudi Arabia) turned out to be a figment of Patrick Buchanan's imagination. Jihads were called and nobody showed up. The U.S.-led coalition held together firmly. A wave of anti-American terrorism never materialized. Instead, Bush won an unambiguous victory. Who'd have guessed it?

Not Saddam. He should have had an inkling, though, that Baghdad was a ripe target. Hitting Baghdad was "the plan from the beginning," says a senior White House official. General Colin Powell, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had talked openly about his theory of invincible force. The idea is to smash the enemy's ability to make war, not just the troops fighting the war. The theory was applied successfully in Panama in December 1989. Still, Saddam figured Bush wouldn't be bold enough to hit military-related sites in Baghdad.

An earlier misjudgment of Bush by Saddam was more understandable. On July 25 American Ambassador April Glaspie told him that the United States had "no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflict, like your border disagreement with Kuwait." This was hardly a green light to invade, but it wasn't a promise of stern U.S. opposition either. Saddam invaded and got his first surprise. Bush organized the world, through the United Nations, against Iraq. Economic sanctions were imposed. Saddam was unimpressed.

His second shock came when Bush dispatched more than 500,000 American troops to the Gulf with scarcely a hitch. I can understand his surprise on this, too. If

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you'd asked anyone in the Washington political community on August 1 if Bush could pull off the deployment to the Middle East of as many troops as the United States ever had in Vietnam, they'd have said no way. Yet Bush managed it without dividing America, igniting an Arab insurrection, or alienating the Soviet Union. This, in fact, was Bush's most stunning achievement. Saddam's problem was that he thinks the United States (and thus Bush) is feckless. "You are not the ones who protected your friends during the [Iraqi] war with Iran," he told Glaspie on July 25. "I assure you, had the Iranians overrun the region, the American troops would not have stopped them, except by the use of nuclear weapons. . . . Yours is a society which cannot accept 10,000 dead in one battle."

Saddam was surprised again after he released American and other hostages in December. He calculated this would appease his opponents, weaken the anti-Iraq coalition, and make war less likely. Instead, it made Bush's decision to go to war easier. Bush claimed the presence of hostages would not affect his policy, but it would have. Anyway, by January 29 Saddam had discovered his blunder—too late. "Hypocritical politicians" in the West "said that keeping the foreign guests here would in fact itself lead to war, would cause the war to happen, but letting them go will prevent war from happening," he groused to Arnett. He believed them. Saddam said he never regrets a decision. But he wondered aloud: "Had we kept those 5,000 individuals . . . would Bush still have attacked Baghdad?" The answer is maybe not.

I can't prove it, but my assumption is that Saddam thought that cracking the coalition would be easy. Attack Israel, prompt a retaliation, and Bush wouldn't be able to hold Arab countries in the alliance. Some Arab leaders were queasy. "We worried about this enough to work it," says a Bush aide. After a pro-Saddam demonstration in Morocco, Bush sweet-talked King Hassan by telephone and sent Deputy Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger to assure Hassan that the United States doesn't have territorial ambitions in Iraq. When Scuds began bombarding Israel, Bush changed his war plan to keep the Israelis from retaliating. "We figured they'd respond [to the attacks]," the aide says. But American warplanes, diverted from other missions to knock out Scud launchers, notched some successes. Bush wooed Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir in three phone calls. And Israel didn't retaliate.

Saddam put still more pressure on the coalition when he accepted the Soviet plan for a conditional withdrawal from Kuwait on February 18. That shook the Egyptians, French, and Italians, among other American allies. Bush rejected the plan flatly and persuaded his allies to do the same. Getting their agreement on a counterproposal was harder. Bush wanted to give the Iraqis four days to vacate Kuwait, but some allies were willing to allow nearly three weeks. Bush insisted on no more than seven days, and the allies fell in line. His last call before announcing the deadline on February 21 was to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who signed on. "Bush stays real close to Mubarak," an official says.

He also stays close to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, enough so that he won the battle with Saddam for Gorbachev. Saddam sought to lure Gorbachev from the coalition by accepting his peace plan. Bush kept on friendly terms with Gorbachev despite burying his plan. Following his announcement of the deadline, Bush called Gorbachev, who wasn't there. Bush waited on the line for a few minutes but soon had to leave the White House to attend the swearing-in of Lynn Martin as labor secretary. Bush told Secretary of State James Baker to hold the phone. As Bush pulled back into the White House driveway a half-hour later, Gorbachev got on the horn. In a call the night before, Bush had trashed six of the eight points in the Soviet plan. This time he spent ninety minutes explaining why the Iraqis had to get out of Kuwait soon and unconditionally. "Mikhail, he [Saddam] has got hundreds of oil wells on fire," Bush said. He dwelt on Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait. Gorbachev was assuaged. Bush is eager for Gorbachev's friendship, postwar, when issues like Iraqi reparations and arms proliferation will come up. "We need the Soviets with us," says a Bush adviser.

Saddam's biggest blunder was reckoning that Bush wouldn't go to war. Four weeks into the air war, he began to understand his error. He accepted the Soviet scheme for ending the war, then a second Soviet plan, then declared a withdrawal on his own. Bush outmaneuvered him each time, making new demands that Saddam couldn't meet. At a Cabinet lunch on February 25, Powell gave administration officials an assessment of the war. They were elated. "I know you can't answer this, Colin," said Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan, "but is it our intention to stop at the border of Kuwait? I hope not." Powell didn't answer. Bush joked about "the Manny Lujan on-to-Baghdad strategy." In fact, taking Baghdad had become a Bush option. Saddam never figured on that either. ●

A report from the front.

KISS OF VICTORY

By Michael Kelly

KUWAIT

I had thought from the moment the first bomb dropped on Baghdad that the match-up between Saddam Hussein and a good portion of the civilized world was wildly one-sided, but the staggering, lunatic scope of the disaster he visited on his people did not actually bring tears to my eyes until the mo-

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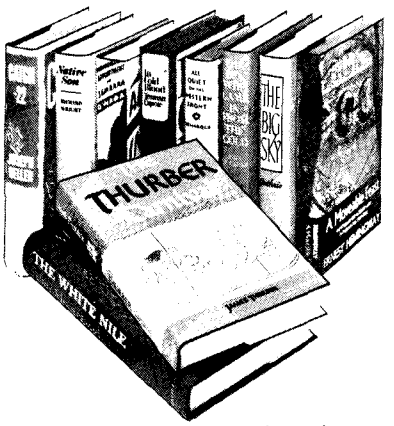

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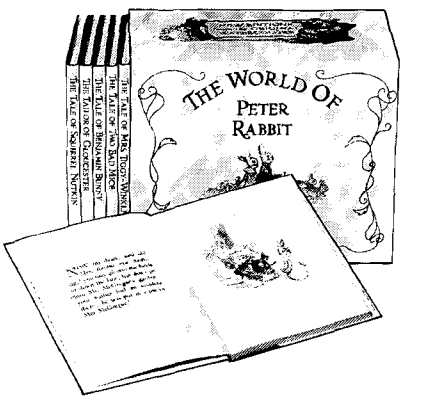

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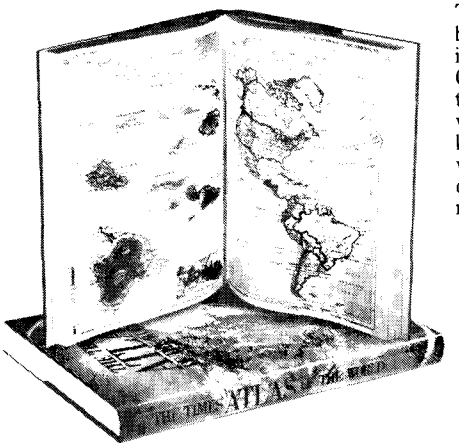

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ment here, on the third day of the ground war, when I took my first, and I hope my last, prisoners of war.

I was driving down the abandoned highway to Kuwait City with my friend Dan Fesperman, a correspondent for *The Baltimore Sun*. We were "doing a unilateral," the press corps' term for getting around the Pentagon's press pool restrictions by ignoring them. I'd been told there was no way I was going to get on a good pool anyway—maybe deck space on a ship in the Red Sea, if I was lucky. So we drove to the war—over the desert, past a couple of checkpoints, and into Kuwait, being careful to avoid American patrols. We had heard that the day before a carload of British hacks had been stopped by American troops. Their officer radioed his commander, who told him that reporters not in a pool should be detained and treated as prisoners of war. The officer decided instead to look the other way while the Brits got the hell out of there, but the story made us wary.

About fifty miles from the city limits, we seemed to be ahead of allied lines in this sector, but that was of little moment. Iraqi troops all across Kuwait were in a frenzy of retreat and surrender. In two days of driving across the Kuwaiti desert and in and out of various battlefields, we had seen tens of thousands of allied troops and vehicles, watched many hundreds of Iraqis surrender, heard allied guns and missiles fire for hours at a time—and had not seen one shot fired by one Iraqi soldier. We never even saw an Iraqi soldier with a rifle in his hand. They had buried them all, filling the desert with a strange crop that will bloom slowly over the centuries, as the shifting sands uncover the weapons that Saddam promised would make the land a lake of American blood.

Still, we were driving with care. The Iraqis had blown up the highway every quarter mile or so, which forced us periodically to swerve off the road and onto the desert, where we had to watch out for stray mine fields. Dan spotted the men first, at a distance of about half a mile, a ragged line of green blocking the road. "They are Iraqis, I think," he said. "You can tell from the uniform.... Do you think they're armed?"

We drove on gingerly and stopped the four-wheel drive a few feet from them. They were ten soldiers, most of them in their 30s and 40s, unarmed, clearly underfed, unshaven, wearing only light uniforms against the cold late-afternoon desert wind. One waved a white rag tied to a bamboo pole; another fluttered a dirty white handkerchief. They held their hands high over their heads and nervously advanced a few feet as we got out of the car.

"No, no," we said. "We are not soldiers. We are journalists. We are *Sahafi*." It didn't matter. The men begged to be taken in. They were cold, they said in broken English, and had already walked six kilometers from their trenches. "We afraid of Saddam," said one. "Not afraid of Americans. United States is good. United States of America is good." Every other soldier in their unit had fled north, they said. "The Iraqi army is not here. Gone. Gone to Iraq."

We gave the men water and bread and chocolate bars, and cheese and salami, and little square cartons of orange drink, and left them. We said we would send someone to pick them up, and headed on toward the capital city. But it was getting dark, which is a bad time to get lost in a war, and then we came across a giant mine field, blocking the road and the desert for hundreds of yards on both sides. (Mine fields, I was interested to learn, are marked—in this case by wire strung on metal posts—so that one's own soldiers won't wander across them and get blown up. This deprives the mine field of the advantage of surprise, but the point of a mine field is not so much to be a kind of static ambush as to slow down an enemy advance.) So we turned back. We found the Iraqis still walking with their white flags before them and decided we could not leave them there. All ten managed to cram into the car: one in the front seat, four in back, and three fitted around the ten jerry cans of gasoline in the rear, with two standing on the bumper.

After a couple of miles we came across a supply column of the Fourth Tank Brigade of the Saudi army, heading to front-line headquarters. We flagged down a truck and told the driver the news.

Within moments thirty-five excited Saudi soldiers crowded around the Iraqis, slamming clips of ammunition into their automatic rifles and carrying on in tremendous excitement as they searched the prisoners. They threw the Iraqis' few possessions, and the food we had just given them, into the sand. One zealous Saudi soldier even grabbed a Koran one Iraqi had been clutching and tossed it aside. They made the terrified prisoners sit in a line, and they shouted and waved their rifles about. Half a dozen prisoners began weeping in fear and begging for their lives. The prisoner whose Koran had been taken away crawled over to retrieve it, and clutched it to his chest for protection as he moaned and rocked back and forth. Another plucked frantically at his hair and his crotch in little agonies of terror, and shouted for his God. But the Saudi troops eventually calmed down, and gave the Iraqis new packages of food, drink, and cigarettes. One young Saudi soldier soothed a distraught Iraqi by placing both hands on his shoulders and kissing him on the forehead. We left the prisoners in the care of a young Saudi lieutenant named Saud Otabi, whose beardless face shone with the pleasure of another glorious, bloodless victory.

It wasn't, after all, the Gulf War. It was the Gulf Rout. The Iraqi troops, hopelessly outgunned and outmaneuvered, never had the slightest chance. Nor,

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it seemed, did many of them want one. They just wanted to quit and go home. On the second day of the ground battle we drove with the Egyptian army through the Iraqi front lines, through Saddam's vaunted defense work. The Egyptian assault began at dawn and by dusk had easily breached the three-foot-high dirt berm, cleared roads through two mine fields, filled in a section of oil-filled trench, cut the rolls of concertina wire, and taken prisoner almost all of the defending Iraqi soldiers in the first line of trenches twelve miles inside Kuwait. There had been some hard resistance, but only in spots, and never for long. Most of the Iraqis had surrendered as soon as they possibly could.

By midafternoon 530 Iraqi soldiers and twenty-two officers sat barefoot in the sand by the section of trench they had given up, their belongings dumped in a pathetic litter nearby: some cheap plastic combs, a few letters, a coin or two. Two men lay dead on the ground, one with blood soaking through his shirt front and back, his mouth gaping at the sky. When several Iraqi prisoners had to urinate, a guard led them a few feet away and stood over them with rifle and bayonet as they pissed in the trench they had given up only an hour earlier.

"Personally, I did not fight at all," said one Iraqi lieutenant in quite good English. "Not one bit, and I urged my men not to fight either. We had no wish to be attacked. When we saw we were safe, that was enough. We did not wish to fight. Why to fight? For what?" He smiled a small, bitter smile, and gestured at the barren land around him. "For Kuwait?"

The lieutenant and his men had only stayed in the trenches, he said, because "otherwise Saddam would hang our families—babies, girls, brothers. They did it many times." Even if the Iraqi soldiers had wished to fight, the impossibility of their plight was staggeringly obvious on the ground. It could be seen in the Egyptian attack, which—on just this one relatively small and lightly defended stretch—encompassed two battalions totaling 10,000 troops, hundreds of tanks, armored personnel carriers, self-propelled 155mm howitzers, jeeps, half-tracks, supply trucks, and so on and on in an ever moving supply line that stretched by day's end sixteen miles to the Saudi lines.

The attacking forces filled the eye to the horizon in every direction, and filled the ear too, with the thuds and booms and the shelling punctuated by the soft, sibilant whistle of ground-to-ground missiles, which left a puffy white trail against the gray sky. Arrayed against all this was a thin line of demoralized troops, in the kind of fixed defenses that went out with the Maginot Line. Iraqi prisoners said almost uniformly that they had been living in fear and hunger and great fatigue since the war began, and some of them complained that Saddam had pulled back the big guns that were to defend their positions before the attack even began. A garrison in the western desert town of Al Abraq, liberated on the third day by most of an entire Egyptian division, had only one, possibly broken, armored personnel carrier to defend it.

The 400 Iraqi soldiers left to defend the town were so eager to surrender that some of them ran out from their bunkers and gave themselves up to the division's commanding officer while he was making a tour of the perimeter accompanied by only two aides and a soldier. It is a measure of how weak the resistance was that the Egyptian attack was waged without any air support at all. By the end of the third day of battle, the day Saddam announced that he was, really and truly this time, pulling out of Kuwait right now, the fight was over. The allied generals were saying their troops would liberate Kuwait City within two days at most, but that was a very conservative estimate.

The invasion had become something akin to the world's largest cross-country drive. That afternoon we drove to the head of the lead Egyptian column, and for a while amused ourselves and the troops by taking a position in our Nissan Safari at the very front of the front. Behind us stretched an unbroken line of men and matériel that now went back forty-some miles without a worry in the world, or at least in the 19th province of Iraq.

MICHAEL KELLY is TNR's special correspondent in the Gulf region.

How the press lost their Gulf war.

SHOOTING POOL

By Peter Schmeisser

One casualty of the Gulf war appears to be the independent, itinerant war correspondent. The press pool system used in the Gulf encouraged the most docile sort of pack journalism. Only 160 reporters were allowed near the front lines, and these had to travel in groups of a half dozen or more, with military public affairs officers close behind. The most gripping reports came from correspondents who violated ground rules and hitched up with Egyptian or Saudi units, despite the fact that this was overwhelmingly an American operation—and an American victory. (See "Kiss of Victory" by Michael Kelly, page 18.) As one seasoned journalist put it, throughout the war American correspondents were "like senior citizens on a package tour."

Debate on the new pool system has focused on the

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"security review" rules, which barred reporters from revealing facts that might jeopardize operations or lives. In theory, these rules make sense, though in past wars correspondents obeyed them voluntarily. The Pentagon says that uncontrolled numbers of journalists at the front would bring chaos, but the media can voluntarily keep its numbers in check. Failing this, the military could limit numbers without restraints on access. The fact is that history is filled with examples where independent reportage increases the efficiencies of the military and actually saves lives.

What's been missing from the debate, however, is a clear idea of how this state of affairs came into being. And the reason the media have been quiet about it is simple: they themselves were present at every stage of the pool's evolution. The system in the Gulf did not spring up in the past six months. It evolved over the previous six years, during which the press had numerous opportunities to fight the system aggressively. They didn't.

The story begins with the Grenada invasion. The Reagan administration, having witnessed the successful strategy of press control that Margaret Thatcher constructed to wage the Falklands campaign (the plan contained pooling and a central military source for all combat information), tried an even more restrictive tack in preparing for the invasion of the Caribbean island. On October 25, 1983, when U.S. forces landed on Grenada, the press corps was simply left behind. Some journalists who chartered boats to get to the island were intercepted and held for two days on board a Navy ship. The press corps was furious.

Soon afterward the Defense Department appointed a review board headed by Brigadier General Winant Sidle to study the deteriorating media-military relations. Sidle had been the chief of public affairs for the combined U.S. services in Vietnam. Hearings were held in February 1984, and several months later he submitted eight recommendations, all of which Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger promised to implement. One suggestion called for the formation of a war pool that could be sent in within hours of combat—a stop-gap measure to ensure that at least some correspondents would be present to gather news until the rest of the press corps could reach the theater.

The pools were advertised as a boon, with no mention of restrictions, field censorship, or military escorts. Sidle stressed that the media were perfectly capable of following the basic security guidelines voluntarily. By October 1984 the Pentagon announced the formation of a Department of Defense Media Pool. The major news organizations quickly signed up, with little concern about exactly how the pool structure would operate, or the assumption that it would dissolve soon after hostilities began.

The sole voice of suspicion came from *Time* magazine's Washington bureau, where editors were leery of getting permission to cover events that had been open to journalists before Grenada. The Washington bureau wanted to boycott the proposed pools, and *Time*'s head office in New York approved the tactic but warned that a press refusal would work only if all the big news houses acted in unison. A quick polling of other Washington bureaus brought the same reply: "We support you in principle, but we can't afford to get left behind once the shooting starts." *Time* bellied up to the pool.

The Pentagon pool arrangement was tested during a number of small-scale operations, chiefly in Central America, but the 1989 invasion of Panama was its first real dry run. The military transport that flew the pool to cover the invasion was more than five hours late. Subsequently the DOD's own investigations concluded that Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney had decided not to activate the Pentagon's new pool in time for them to reach Panama City; Cheney also quashed an Army plan to set up a pool consisting of reporters already in Panama at the time of the invasion. When reporters finally arrived in Panama City, military escorts barred them from the scene of the fighting. When the bulk of the press corps arrived to relieve the pool, they too were confined to a local military base.

It was a public relations debacle. Once again the Pentagon appointed a military public affairs officer to conduct the post-mortem. Fred S. Hoffman, a Reagan-appointed spokesman in the Department of Defense, made seventeen recommendations arguing for less military surveillance of the press and stressing the importance of media coverage of military operations. He called on Assistant Secretary of Defense Pete Williams to "weigh in aggressively" with Cheney and General Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, if "secrecy or other obstacles" blocked dispatches from combat. As after Grenada, press leaders failed to follow up and make certain that DOD's own recommendations were implemented.

Late last summer Williams began to make preparations for handling press coverage of events in the Gulf. On August 13 he ordered six press officers to accompany a seventeen-member press pool to Dhahran. The officers were charged with setting up a Joint Information Bureau (JIB) in Saudi Arabia. The man Williams picked to supervise the arrangements was Michael Sherman, a Navy captain who had spent his boyhood in Saudi Arabia. A television journalism major in college, "Hollywood Mike" Sherman was director of Navy public relations in Los Angeles, the office that brought you *Top Gun*. Experienced in flacking the Navy's latest technical gadgetry, Sherman had earlier worked as an adviser to film studios on such movies as *The Hunt for Red October* and *Flight of the Intruder*.

Meanwhile, in Washington, a crisis was mounting with the Saudis, who were refusing to allow the second wave of journalists to enter the country. Saudi intransigence critically altered the bargaining balance between the press and the Pentagon. Faced with an implacable

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third party, the team sent to bargain for the press was squeezed into an uncomfortable alliance with Williams and the Pentagon. On October 9 Michael Getler, assistant managing editor of *The Washington Post*, sent letters to Williams and Prince Bandar Bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the United States, asking the Saudis to reverse their policy of issuing only one visa per news organization. Editors from *The Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *Time*, and *The Wall Street Journal* co-signed the letter.

The Getler letter led to a meeting between the major print media, the television networks, and Williams in mid-October. The journalists' objectives were to scale down the "security review" and eliminate the requirement of military escorts. They ended up with neither. Negotiations over free access degenerated into a haggle over logistics. More visas were needed, and a guarantee of military transportation if fighting erupted in the region and commercial flights got canceled. At the close of the session Williams announced he was drawing up a new incarnation of the war pool but refused to discuss the matter until he had briefed Cheney and Powell.

The next meeting was held on November 28. Getler told Williams that the assembled journalists sensed "another Grenada and Panama in the works." They felt that plans for combat coverage of a war in the Gulf were "gravely off-track." Although all present admired Williams's patience, Getler said, "We are not convinced that you can persuade Cheney, Powell, or Schwarzkopf of the importance of independent journalism once the shooting starts." Getler was right. During this and future meetings, Williams worked through four drafts of ground rules with press representatives. He noted their complaints, and reassured them that he wanted to get out of the pool business as much as they did. Williams pledged to placate the Saudis and set things straight with Cheney and Powell. Williams, as understanding as a good therapist, urged the media to bide their time.

Early drafts of Williams's plan divided a possible war into three phases, with the third phase allowing for independent coverage and the dissolution of the war pool. This third phase was where the Pentagon's system had failed in Panama; after the first twenty-four hours the rank-and-file press corps had not been permitted to relieve the temporary war pools. When copies of the ground rules came back from CENTCOM in January, all mention of a third phase had vanished.

After the air bombardments of Baghdad started in mid-January, Williams continued to promise that when the land war began access to the front would improve. But that never happened. The Pentagon announced that those who went off on their own to the front would be brought back forcibly to Dhahran and stripped of their credentials.

Whatever the demerits of the pool system, the press was outflanked by the Pentagon, and should learn from the mistake. Howell Raines, who sat in on the negotiations for *The New York Times*, puts the denouement succinctly: "We lost. They managed us completely. If it were an athletic contest, the score would be 100-to-1." Stanley Cloud, Washington bureau chief of *Time*, concedes: "Throughout the long evolution of the Department of Defense pool, the press willingly, passively, and stupidly went along with it. That is the original sin which got us where we are, and I don't blame anybody as much as I blame us."

PETER SCHMEISSER's book on government-media relations in wartime, *Silencing Jeremiah*, will be published next year by Viking.

A short history of wartime censorship.

READ SOME ABOUT IT

By Arthur Lubow

Ever since organized war reporting began, belligerent nations have been trying to muzzle war correspondents. The stated purpose is always to keep secrets from the enemy. The unstated purpose, when the war, unlike the Gulf conflict, goes badly, is to keep secrets from the citizens back home. Although civil libertarians may see a yawning gulf between these two motivations, for a military commander the two overlap. It is easier to prosecute a war if the enemy is befuddled and the home front is bamboozled.

William Howard Russell, the first war correspondent, quickly discovered the dynamic that would govern his profession. Sent to the Crimea in the winter of 1854-55 by *The Times* of London, Russell described the suffering of British troops and the idiocy of their leaders. At Balaclava, he wrote: "The commonest accessories of a hospital are wanting; there is not the least attention paid to decency or cleanliness—the stench is appalling—the fetid air can barely struggle out to taint the atmosphere, save through the chinks in the walls and roofs, and, for all I can observe, these men die without the least effort being made to save them." Lord Raglan, the commanding general, urged *The Times* to suppress Russell's reports on the grounds that they aided the enemy. In fact, the Russians knew how bad conditions were at the front. It was the Britons back home who were in the dark. Once they were enlightened, the Cabinet fell; and at the front Britain belatedly introduced military censorship.

In those days, however, censorship was crude and tentative. The latter half of the nineteenth century was

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in fact the golden age of the war correspondent. The exploits of these men are legendary. Archibald Forbes sneaked in and out of starving, besieged Paris near the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, to report in the London *Daily News*: "I had brought in, stowed in a wallet on my back, some five pounds of ham. The servants of the place where I stayed put the meat on a dish with a cover over it, and showed it up and down the Rue du Faubourg St. Honore as a curiosity, charging a sou for lifting the cover." In 1872, pursued by hostile Cossacks across the frigid steppes, J. A. MacGahan rode 400 miles to catch up with the Russian army; and then, finding that the army had advanced, he continued the same distance through what was said to be impassable desert to Khiva. In 1898, witnessing a bloody rebellion against the British Lancers at Omdurman in the Sudan, George W. Steevens wrote for the London *Daily Mail*: "The last dervish stood up and filled his chest; he shouted the name of his God and hurled his spear. Then he stood quite still, waiting. It took him full; he quivered, gave at the knees, and toppled with his head on his arms and his face turned towards the legions of his conquerors." These heroic sagas have long nourished the souls of war correspondents in the way that tales of Sitting Bull comfort the reservation-bound Sioux.

Progress in communications doomed the old-fashioned war correspondent. Because telegraph facilities were scarce and expensive, the early correspondents had relied on the mails; their dispatches were published too late to be of strategic use to the enemy. By the time of the Spanish-American War in 1898, however, the cable was cheap and available. The American authorities installed censors at the telegraph offices where reporters filed (first in Tampa and Key West, later in Cuba) and at the receiving stations in New York. On the battlefield, however, reporters were still perfectly free.

It was the Japanese, in their 1904-05 conflict with Russia, who turned the ratchet of censorship to the squeaking point by introducing what today we call "pooling." Promising Western correspondents a trip to the front, the Japanese authorities kept them bottled up in Tokyo for months. When a handful of reporters were at last selected to go to Manchuria, they were detained under tight escort at a risible distance from the fighting. The Japanese were censoring what reporters could see as well as what they could write. Frederick Palmer covered both the Spanish-American and the Russo-Japanese wars, and he lived to read of the Korean War a half-century later. As an old man he declared that the Russo-Japanese War was the beginning of the end: "It was the start of the secrecy which in the world wars to come barred reporters from the front lines, so that no public should ever know the truth."

For a democracy, total censorship on the Japanese model was thought to be too brutal. An added refinement was required. It arrived with the First World War. Recognizing the need to disseminate helpful news as well as to suppress the unhelpful, upon entering the First World War the U.S. government created a bureau under Colorado publicist George Creel that would not only administer censorship but also supply war news. By the Second World War these functions had evolved distinctly enough for President Roosevelt to create the straightforwardly named Office of Censorship and Office of War Information. As an index of the success of these sister bureaus, one remembers that, thanks to total censorship in Honolulu and misleading official statements in Washington, for a year the United States concealed the extent of the damage at Pearl Harbor. The Japanese knew what their bombers had accomplished. Americans did not. However, correspondents were allowed to accompany the troops, and they witnessed the critical battles, including the landings at Guadalcanal, North Africa, and Normandy.

Unlike the two world wars, the conflict in Korea engulfed the United States without warning. Lacking official guidance, correspondents at the start of the war vividly described the panicked, desperate, under-equipped GIs falling back before the onslaught from the north. Marguerite Higgins of the *New York Herald Tribune* quoted a young lieutenant: "Are you correspondents telling people back home the truth? Are you telling them that out of one platoon of twenty men we have three left? Are you telling them that we have nothing to fight with, and that it is an utterly useless war?" General MacArthur's staff branded the reporters traitors and threatened to revoke their credentials, but MacArthur waited six months before imposing formal censorship. By that time most of the reporters actually favored formal censorship over the self-censorship that they had been observing. (One described the procedure as "you-write-what-you-like-and-we'll-shoot-you-if-we-don't-like-it.") Although on paper the code was harsh—no "derogatory comments" about United Nations commanders or troops, and no unauthorized disclosures about the impact of enemy fire, for example—in practice the censors were lenient in letting copy through and lax in punishing infractions.

In Korea, as in the world wars, Washington coupled misinformation to censorship in a flagging effort to control American opinion. Near the end of the war, for instance, in the midst of peace negotiations, an embarrassed White House contradicted accurate accounts that it was about to accede to a divided Korea. As *The New York Times*'s James Reston wrote, "The official art of denying the truth without actually lying is as old as government itself." Censorship and misinformation, both in moderation, were part of the game. The reporters were content, or as content as reporters are temperamentally able to be.

But everything went haywire in Vietnam. That war trampled the delicate pas de deux of the previous half century, in which the government imposed censorship and prettified the truth, while the press tested the censorship and challenged the obfuscations. The peculiar

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situation of the press in Vietnam stemmed from the unprecedented circumstances of the conflict. It was not a declared war and therefore the president could not impose military censorship. Since the war proceeded largely as a counterinsurgency, it would have been hard in any event to make the face-saving argument that censorship was essential to preserve strategic secrets, rather than to sway opinion back home. With government assistance, reporters in Vietnam traveled easily to the battlefield and, except for minimal restrictions (no identification of casualties until the families had been informed, for instance), described what they saw.

In this first American war of the television era, TV correspondents could record the sorts of images that *The New Yorker*'s Michael Arlen described in one "routine film clip": "Scenes of men moving in to attack, and attacking—scenes, in fact, of men living close to death and killing—with one heart-rending sequence of a young soldier being carried out, his leg apparently smashed, screaming to his comrades, 'It hurts! It hurts!' " Not since the golden age had war correspondents been so free to move.

Without censorship the government was like a man who has lost one arm: it overdeveloped its remaining limb, propaganda. Military prestidigitators in Saigon invented figures to show how well the war was going. Back home, officials from the president on down strong-armed editors and publishers into suppressing and distorting the reports from the field. At Otto Feuerbringer's *Time*, editors privy to the "big picture" from Pentagon brass assiduously rewrote the files provided by their correspondents in Vietnam. At *The New York Times* the new publisher, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, was summoned in October 1963 to a White House meeting with President Kennedy, who suggested that young David Halberstam had gotten too close to the story in Vietnam and would benefit from a transfer. (Sulzberger declined to transfer him.)

Unable despite these efforts to squelch pessimistic reporting, Washington tried to smother it by inviting dozens of correspondents (Joseph Alsop and Marguerite Higgins were the two most famous) to make quick, escorted tours of the war zone and return with predictions of American victory. What everyone now remembers is the widening credibility gap that eventually swallowed the Johnson administration. But for a time the military's propaganda prevailed. The perception at home was that the war would be won.

However, the policy of letting the reporters see everything and then denying everything they saw ultimately backfired. In this country (and even more in others) the war correspondent has traditionally regarded himself as a loyal auxiliary to his nation's armed forces. In the two world wars American correspondents even wore military uniforms. Although reporters are supposed to be noncombatants, from Richard Harding Davis at Las Guasimas to Charles Mohr at Hue they have carried weapons and joined in assaults. Over the course of the Vietnam War, this partiality to the home team was slowly and painfully eroded. "There gets to be a point when the question is, Whose side are you on?" Dean Rusk told a group of reporters after the Tet offensive. "Now, I'm the secretary of state of the United States and I'm on our side." Even when they favored the American mission of "fighting communism" (and, especially before 1968, most did), American reporters lost their team spirit as they struggled to get their stories heard over the static of misleading bureaucrats. The officials, in turn, grew convinced that the reporters were on "the other side," and blamed the press for souring the American public on the war effort. It was an extreme case of the old dynamic.

To put matters in perspective, consider this incident from the Spanish-American War. Following their triumph at San Juan hill, American troops hunkered down in front of Santiago. They were soaked by torrential rains, raked by Spanish bullets, and racked by tropical fevers. After three days of this, Richard Harding Davis, the most celebrated correspondent of his day, wrote a story for the *New York Herald* that conveyed the desperation, and concluded: "Truthfully, the expedition was prepared in ignorance and conducted in a series of blunders. . . . This is written with the sole purpose that the entire press of the country will force instant action at Washington to relieve the strained situation." When the story appeared, some accused Davis of treason, and the commanding general later said that had he read it in Cuba, he would have arrested and deported Davis immediately. However, between the time that these words were written and published, the Spanish fleet was destroyed, assuring an American victory. There was no need to accuse Davis and his brethren journalists of stabbing their country in the back, of draining America's will to fight. America had won.

Vietnam was a different story—an unprecedented defeat. One lesson in press relations that American authorities took from Vietnam to the current war in the Gulf is that the less said, the better. They are providing almost no information, true or false. Instead, they are relying on a censorship that is almost as rigid as the Japanese variety of 1904-05. Generals prefer to fight with no one watching. For the political leadership, however, a war that lasts more than a few days requires public consent, and the public demands at least some information. The journalists, for their part, are already nostalgic for the good old days of Vietnam, when they could go virtually everywhere and see virtually everything. Both the press and the military are burdened with the memory of Vietnam, but their memories should be longer. Vietnam was an anomaly. In modern war, reporters must be permitted at the front, and they must submit to sensible censorship. Mutual mistrust is part of the shared heritage of soldiers and journalists in time of war. So is mutual accommodation.

ARTHUR LUBOW is completing a biography of Richard Harding Davis.

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Bush's pathetic postwar plan.

WASTE OF ENERGY

By Gregg Easterbrook

Wars, for all their horrors, sometimes have the compensating virtue of creating moments when the status quo is disrupted and societies may engage in fundamental reforms. The United States went to war in the Persian Gulf in part because American society exhibits the structural flaw of using energy unwisely. A historic opportunity to resolve that flaw is at hand. Instead the Bush administration has proposed an energy plan so undistinguished that it makes past efforts such as Richard Nixon's Project Independence seem positively inspired.

The long-promised National Energy Strategy (NES), which prior to the invasion of Kuwait had been logged as the centerpiece of President Bush's 1991 State of the Union address, was sent to Congress after nearly two years of preparation. It will be laughed off the Hill in much less time. Title pages of the NES are imprinted with the epigram FIRST EDITION, oddly acknowledging the plan's DOA status. Though the strategy contains attractive provisions, there is too much emphasis on new production, something the market already pressures for powerfully. Absent are the two reforms most needed: conservation standards and energy pricing that reflects the true social cost. There is no sentence in the 214-page document that would displease any monied interest group—the surest sign of a failed policy.

Jimmy Carter's Department of Energy bungled the 1979 petroleum shortage, but his decontrol of oil and gas prices triggered dramatic increases in energy supply, and a combination of conservation policies and market incentives inspired a big jump in efficiency. Between 1972 and 1986 U.S. energy consumption per dollar of GNP output declined 26 percent. Only Japan had a better track record for the period. The trouble is that efficiency growth has stalled since, while oil imports have crept back upward and the true cost of fossil fuel indulgence has begun to suggest itself in global temperature trends. Bush's plan only nips at the margins of such issues.

At the heart of the energy strategy dispute are two ideologically pleasing but otherwise counterproductive ways of viewing the world. In the conservative framework, all energy problems must be solved with more supply. Somehow the thought of limitless resources coursing through the system—"extracted" from the otherwise worthless ground, to be burned in crucibles fierce with power—is in itself pleasing, regardless of whether the end product is employed judiciously. In the liberal framework, all energy problems must be solved with wrenching cuts. Somehow the thought of middle-class comforts being revoked, those tasteless suburban homes made chilly, and private cars replaced with grim lines for crowded wood-burning buses is in itself pleasing.

But all that really matters about energy is whether its use is prudent: how much goes into the system versus what standard of living comes out. It is silly for market worshipers to dispute that dollar for dollar, more can be accomplished in less time with conservation measures than with increased output. Conservation investments since 1973 have already displaced more energy than flows from all U.S. oil production combined, a spectacular low-cost achievement. It is equally silly for liberals to dispute that the world needs a robust energy supply: no American environmentalist who rails against oil production is himself willing to live without a car.

With these thoughts in mind let's run down the National Energy Strategy and the alternatives:

BUSH IDEAS, GOOD. Of several NES proposals well worth preserving, one would make it easier for electric utilities to earn a profit by promoting conservation. The standard rate-base system rewards utilities for pushing up consumption, since their cost-plus arrangement grows the more customers spend. If instead utilities are allowed to keep as profit a portion of what customers save from more efficient energy use, everybody benefits. This approach is one of many possibilities that focus on the demand rather than supply side of the power equation.

Another Bush proposal would increase competition among power suppliers and transmission wholesalers while ending the idiotic practice of selling excess federal power at cost, which encourages waste. In consumer areas Bush calls for labeling and efficiency standards for consumer products, most importantly light bulbs. The costs for lighting and extra air conditioning to compensate for bulb-caused heat account for an amazing 7 percent of U.S. energy consumption. Homes and

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public housing built with federal support would be required to meet efficiency standards, and the many buildings operated by the federal government itself would have to cut back power consumption, helping expand markets for efficiency technology.

Various measures would make more practical the use of natural gas in industrial and consumer applications. (Methane is plentiful and the cleanest fossil fuel; combustion generates less of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide than coal or oil, and no acid air or smog.) A bounty program would be established to get old, inefficient, and high-pollution vehicles off the road.

Many of these ideas, however desirable, do not represent bold strokes by Bush, merely codifications of things already happening. For instance most state public utility commissions are already experimenting with rate systems that reward conservation; existing legislation already schedules natural gas for final decontrol in 1993.

In the sole visionary provision of the NES, operators of truck or car fleets, such as UPS and AT&T, would be required to switch to alternative fuels such as methanol and compressed natural gas. The Bush plan's claim to reduce U.S. oil consumption by 1.3 million barrels per day, roughly a fifth of the current import total, rests almost entirely on this provision, since little is done to cut oil use directly.

Some alternative fuels not only are superior to gasoline from an environmental standpoint, they are close to being cost-competitive. The market has been held back mainly by the chicken-or-egg quandary that no one will buy a methanol car till gas stations sell the stuff, and no station will sell the stuff till drivers want it. Mandatory fleet use should create an infrastructure for alternative fuels, and will dovetail with provisions of the recently signed Clean Air Act that require automakers to begin offering non-gasoline cars in about five years.

BUSH IDEAS, BAD. These include ones to encourage domestic oil exploration offshore and in national parks, notably the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR); and to speed licensing of new nuclear plants. Liberals are recoiling from such proposals for the wrong reasons. Continental shelf oil, for example, has a reasonable environmental track record; the platforms send their production to the shore via pipelines, which unlike tankers cannot run aground. Most opposition to offshore production is aesthetic: people don't want the views from their vacation homes spoiled. But they do want to drive to those homes in private cars. Why should the aesthetic penalties of an oil economy be confined to places like west Texas? Maybe if there were numerous oil platforms spoiling the view off Carmel and La Jolla, California, trendsetters would be more willing to buy efficient cars.

Similarly, the knee-jerk reaction that nuclear power is a menace to life as we know it grows harder to fathom with each passing year. A recent, extensive study by the National Cancer Institute, which has a financial self-interest in cancer anxiety, failed to detect unusual cancer incidence among people who live near nuclear generating stations; and though nuclear waste is a vexing concern, the World Health Organization says that coal waste, a toxic substance hundreds of times more voluminous than radioactive waste, poses a greater public health threat than the byproducts of nuclear plants.

The reason all-out offshore oil and a new nuclear push are bad ideas is that we don't need them. Conservation can save as much energy as such new sources would produce, more quickly and at a lower cost. Nuclear plants are so uneconomical on a cost-per-kilowatt basis that it is preposterous even to consider them until reactor manufacturers find a way to bring the price down.

And proposing to cut drilling support roads into Alaska's ANWR, one of the few major pristine land tracts remaining on planet Earth, is a disgrace. Even optimistic projections suggest that fields in the preserve would produce less than could be saved with two more miles per gallon in average auto efficiency.

A sad aspect of the Bush NES is that it was directed by Energy Secretary James Watkins, a firebrand conservative by temperament, but nonetheless open-minded and forward-thinking, as he showed on the Reagan AIDS Commission and in cleaning up the DOE's nuclear-weapons mess. Watkins pressured Bush for a commitment to conservation but was rebuffed by the troika of chief of staff John Sununu, budget director Richard Darman, and Michael Boskin, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers.

BUSH IDEAS, UNPUBLISHED. The most significant unspoken assumption of the NES report is alarm over energy itself. Today hardly any commentators except for professional doomsayers fear "running out of energy," the great panic story of the 1970s. Generally accepted estimates now show the world having at current prices and consumption rates 1,500 years of coal, 120 years of natural gas, and sixty years of oil. Though world consumption will rise as more countries industrialize, uncharted deposits and new recovery technologies probably can at least double the gas and oil reserve figures.

This suggests that there will be plenty of today's energy well into the twenty-second century, by which point society will have kicked the fossil fuel habit (see "Tilting at Windmills," page 29), and our descendants can wonder what all the fuss was about. Since supply trends are favorable, power policy ought rather to concentrate on demand trends and prudent use. The environmental, national security, and balance-of-trade implications of energy waste are now more urgent than the "running out" prospects. Yet the president offers an energy policy that contains the same big flaw as Carter's worst energy thinking, a false Chicken Little assumption about supply. The NES should be changed to incorporate:

EFFICIENT CARS. "We must avoid unwise and extreme measures such as excessive CAFE [corporate average fuel economy] standards that would seriously hurt America's jobs and American industries," Bush said when introducing the NES, whose most noticeable failing is lack of any title to raise the CAFE from its present 27.5 miles per gallon level.

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Did the first federal standards, which cut U.S. gas consumption per car from 785 gallons annually in 1972 to about 500 gallons today, hurt America's jobs and industry? Only if you think the reduction in U.S. oil imports during the 1980s was a bad thing for the economy. Only if you think demand reductions that forced OPEC to cut its price equilibrium, so that today petroleum sells for less per barrel in inflation-adjusted terms than it did fifteen years ago, was a bad thing for the economy.

Recently Detroit executives have seized on the lobbying self-pity line that mileage standards were to blame for their profitability problems and layoffs in the early 1980s. They neatly ignore the record earnings years that followed. Poor quality and being out of touch with what customers were buying were the real sources of Detroit's problems. Had CAFE not forced American manufacturers to learn how to make efficient cars, U.S. industry might have lost even more ground to Japan. Nevertheless, now the automaker's tale of woe is that raising the CAFE number to 35 or 40 mpg will ruin the domestic auto industry by forcing the Big Three to produce very small cars that people won't buy.

Environmentalists who tout shrunken cars must face the fact that such vehicles fare poorly in collisions. But otherwise Detroit's excuse is bunkum. Since OPEC prices broke in the early 1980s, automakers (including the Japanese) have concentrated research on cars that are reasonably fuel efficient but really quick. Today's typical new car gets twelve more miles per gallon than it did in 1975, and accelerates about 15 percent faster. Auto engineers could trade back half that propulsion increase for mpg and end up with cars that are still quicker than before the first gas crunch, yet also large and comfortable.

An example: the Ford Thunderbird I bought in 1985 was a large car that had a 170-horsepower engine, got 26 mpg according to EPA standards, and went from zero to 60 in 9.5 seconds. The comparable 1991 model has a 210-horsepower engine, records 22 mpg, and whips through the sprint in just 7.1 seconds. Power train engineering innovations in the new model have been devoted to achieving off-the-line speeds that are almost never required under actual circumstances. The technology that makes the 1991 Thunderbird blazing fast could instead produce a big car that is merely mighty fast, and gets 35 miles per gallon. Don't let Detroit tell you otherwise.

THE ALTERNATIVE TO FEDERAL MPG. Congress will push for a CAFE increase but should look instead to a concept awkwardly called "feebates." Under feebates the CAFE standard remains where it is but anyone buying a car that is less fuel-efficient pays a fee, while those picking cars with superior efficiency get rebates. If the feebate number was $100 per gallon, a 35 mpg car would bring the owner a $750 check, whereas a 20 mpg guzzler would cost an additional $750. Last year a feebate regime was nearly enacted in California, the auto market bellwether, and one may prevail this year.

Tilting at Windmills

Well before conventional energy reserves wane, society may be able to move on to power forms more innocuous than fossil fuel and uranium. Some candidates:

Hydrogen. The cleanest fuel, burning without any pollution residue, it would be ideal for cars, trucks, and airplanes. Hydrogen might also someday drive individual "fuel cells," making electricity home by home, with water as their sole by-product. Already power grid designers think that small, scattered generating systems ought to replace large, centralized stations; transmission losses would be cut and the huge capital risk and lead-times involved in big projects could be avoided. Generating electricity in the home would be the ultimate in market-responsive energy.

Unfortunately no process yet exists to provide hydrogen on an economical basis; making it from natural gas adds nothing to net energy supply, and some chemists decree that subtracting hydrogen from water can never be cost-effective. But how many processes taken for granted today would have been described as violating the laws of physics by scientists a generation ago? If someone just invents a practical means to separate hydrogen from water, the entire Oil Age becomes a historical asterisk. One intriguing though farfetched idea is an artificial version of photosynthesis, the process by which plants convert sunlight to chemical energy.

Solar and wind power. Practical experience has shown that these are far from panaceas. But the efficiency of photovoltaic cells and other forms of solar converters continues to increase while prices gradually fall; by the turn of the century solar may make a meaningful contribution to electric supplies. And in principle, all U.S. electricity demand could be satisfied by a network of an estimated 4 million wind turbines, distributed mainly in low-population areas of the Midwest and mountain states. That won't happen, but a meaningful number of wind turbines may eventually be constructed.

Superconductivity. The all-clear has been sounded from false alarms that superconductivity will soon be practical. But if superconductors ever work at or near room temperature, transmission losses in electric grids could be cut so profoundly that the amount of fuel needed at the generating level might fall by as much as half.

Warm fusion. Still a Big Science midsummer night's dream, but it may work eventually. By mimicking the internal processes of stars, fusion could in theory provide essentially limitless energy from seawater, with less hot waste than today's fission reactors. Fusing an isotope of helium thought to be common on the Moon might make energy with no radioactive byproduct whatsoever. Tell your descendants to stay tuned.

Space solar. Collecting power in space, where the incident energy value of sunlight is much more intense than on Earth, might provide unlimited power that consumes no resources at all. The miles-wide collector satellites that would be necessary for this purpose would probably be practical only in a peaceful world, however, since they would constitute history's most tempting military targets.

G.E.

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Such a system ensures buyers the freedom to decide what they want. Those who insist on guzzlers must contribute toward the true social costs of their preferences, since inefficient vehicles create more pollution and foreign entanglements. A lump-sum penalty or reward at the point of sale would make the buyer's decision easier than trying to project uncertain savings from uncertain gas prices over the uncertain life of a car. And the system would be self-financing, with fees providing the rebate cash pool. To assuage Detroit's concern about whether buyers will want efficient big cars, the penalty might be set at a stiff level, say $200 or $300 per mpg. That will get a 35 mpg Thunderbird on the road pronto.

OIL IMPORT FEES. Many were rooting for an oil import tariff in the NES. Please forget this idea. Canada and Mexico would have to be exempted or the North American free-trade zone would die aborning. Venezuela, a peaceful state in our hemisphere, would deserve exemption. Saudi Arabia and the emirates, our allies, would probably have to be exempted. Who would be left to impose fees against? Mainly Nigeria, Indonesia, Iraq, and Iran, which would simply shift their sales away from us while exempted foreign producers sold us more.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY FALLACY. Another idea that's best forgotten is that conservation will enhance national security by freeing the United States from dependence on foreign oil supplies. This might happen, but such an outcome is far from guaranteed. Conservation, by reducing demand for energy, should lower prices and hence producer profits. Since most domestic oil producers have lower margins than most foreign suppliers, U.S. production would be unlikely to grow. Though absolute quantities of imports should decline, the proportion of oil consumption being imported might stay the same or even increase. This would be an improvement over today, since the international oil price equilibrium would be kept low, saving the United States money and making invasions of oil-bearing lands less attractive. But there is no realistic short-term plan that gets the United States off the Gulf customer list entirely.

The reverse of this reasoning is why many environmentalists secretly like cheap oil. If oil prices rose via some mechanism like a stern import fee, domestic production would become more profitable, and more oil rigs would sprout up across U.S. ecosystems. Political pressures for offshore and Alaskan oil development would become impossible to resist.

PUMP TAXES. Unlike an oil import fee, an across-the-board gasoline tax is an attractive idea. Combined state and federal gas taxes average about thirty-five cents per gallon in the United States. In nearly all other countries the figure is at least $1. Italy taxes gasoline at $3.31 a gallon; Germany, where fast cars are worshipped, at $1.80; Britain, at $1.66.

High gas taxes are not a death knell for an advanced economy, as some conservatives have suggested. They certainly don't hold back Germany or Japan. Far from it, in those nations the main effect of higher gasoline taxes is to ensure favorable balance-of-trade equations. The secondary effect is to create incentives to develop the kind of industrial efficiencies that serve companies well in many aspects of competition. The tertiary effect is to restrain air pollution at lower control costs, by reducing the volume of fuel combusted.

"No new taxes" types worry that higher gasoline levies will simply raise more money for government to waste. There's no reason, however, why gas taxes cannot be revenue-neutral, offset by cuts, especially to low-income taxpayers. "The current American system is to tax labor and capital, both of which are socially beneficial," notes Robert Stavins, a Kennedy School analyst who specializes in energy policy. "We might instead start moving in the direction of taxing things that are socially injurious, such as energy consumption."

Fuel pricing in the United States rarely reflects true social or "external" costs such as pollution control, defense of the Gulf, waste disposal, or possible global climate change. It's not that increasing pump prices would be hitting consumers with a new tax. Consumers are already paying the external costs of energy consumption, just in an unfocused way, through income taxes and environmental damage.

The troubling question is how high pump taxes would have to be set to inspire meaningful changes in consumer attitudes. With the typical car now burning 500 gallons a year, a 50-cent-per-gallon price increase would only cost the average motorist $250, perhaps not enough to get his attention. A full dollar a gallon tax might be necessary to have positive effects on energy consumption trends. Any politician have the guts to advocate this? Remember, other taxes could be cut simultaneously.

TAXES, CARBON. Because the worst external cost of fossil fuel may turn out to be global warming, some economists propose that the output of carbon dioxide, the principle greenhouse gas, be taxed, inspiring industry to cut emissions. Sununu and Darman have expressed horror at this idea, saying it would ruin American competitiveness while costing billions. Not only is this mugwump thinking, it misses a key point: carbon emissions would be reduced primarily by saving energy. A combined anti-greenhouse fuel-efficiency initiative, an idea missing from the NES because Sununu would not hear of it, might make a much better policy objective than more oil drilling.

International agreement on carbon reductions would be ideal, and may come in the next decade. But unilateral carbon charges would not handicap any one nation's economy so long as they are revenue-neutral, offset by equal reductions in other corporate taxation; this is the reason Germany and Japan are contemplating carbon taxes already.

Meanwhile the scary White House estimate that cutting U.S. carbon emissions by 20 percent would cost $200 billion per year in capital investment overlooks the value of the energy that would be saved. A recent Office of Technology Assessment paper suggests that

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when reduced fuel use is taken into account, cooling the greenhouse effect might save the U.S. economy $20 billion annually. A study due shortly from the conservation analyst Amory Lovins will put the potential net savings at $200 billion per year, when long-term fuel reduction is factored in.

Thus there may be no need to fear a carbon charge system, which would probably start at $100 per ton of carbon dioxide emission, raising an estimated $120 billion per year that could be applied to other tax reductions. (Is industry the only villain here? The typical family car emits five tons of carbon dioxide, meaning the true cost of your personal annual global warming contribution is at least $500.) Yet another faction besides the White House fears carbon charges: environmentalists. True cost pricing of fossil fuel emissions would make nuclear reactors, which produce no smog or greenhouse gases, more attractive economically and socially. For this reason some enviros are attempting to rally congressional support for a "BTU charge," a levy not against the side effects of energy but energy use in any form. Such charges could backfire by penalizing benign energy sources like solar and hydro. But then deep ecologists dislike even hydro power, since it requires dams.

R&D DIVERSIONARY ACTION. Though the Bush plan eschews conservation incentives because they would interfere with the hallowed market, the NES does engage in the time-honored Washington tradition of throwing money at the problem, providing a 34 percent increase in federal R&D funding for energy study. Yet private research in real-world market conditions has generated many more useful energy innovations than plodding government grantsmanship, which always seems to flow downhill to the least promising idea, like synfuels. Cars with chip-controlled fuel injectors and multivalve heads, high-bypass jetliner engines, soft fluorescent lighting, scroll-driven air conditioners, advanced industrial combustion chambers, heat pumps, "super" windows, high-R insulation, passive solar design, variable-speed electric motors, and the numerous other conservation ideas that have been cutting U.S. energy use for the last fifteen years have come from market-driven enterprise. Putting any spare federal money into conservation tax credits would be more effective than subsidizing pork barrel R&D.

Besides the White House and Watkins, the third partner in formulating the NES was presidential science adviser D. Allan Bromley. Bromley's office considered dissociating itself from the strategy when it became clear what a loser the NES would be. But the science adviser wins the affection of his constituency by increasing funding for scientists; the R&D bonus was baksheesh to keep Bromley's name on the dotted line.

THE BURDENSOME-GOVERNMENT OBJECTION. Would new conservation standards be bulky, burdensome, onerous? Merely requiring commercial and government buildings to convert to more efficient lighting systems could reduce U.S. electricity consumption by 11 percent, according to the EPA, and should save enough in utility bills to pay for itself in less than three years. Requiring users of electric industrial process motors, which consume half of all U.S. grid power, to convert to efficient new variable-speed models might cut U.S. electricity demand by a quarter and, depending on the factory, pay back in under two years. Many companies are already starting this conversion for that reason.

Complicated solar-mechanical building conservation systems were oversold in the 1970s, but there's no reason why all new home and commercial construction could not be required to incorporate sensible features like passive solar design, high-efficiency air conditioners and heating, resistant insulation, and energy-smart glass. Efficiency for its own sake is not always a valid goal: if a conservation technology costs more than the energy saved, society takes a net loss. But everything above is practical and value-priced.

THOSE FUNNY LIGHT BULBS. After years of stalling by the big manufacturers, compact fluorescents, the weird bulbs that fit in standard sockets, are finally beginning to appear in stores. Compact fluorescent bulbs use much less power than incandescents and last much longer. Over a typical three-year life an 18-watt compact fluorescent, generating the glow of a 75-watt incandescent, will save a barrel and a half of oil or 770 pounds of coal. These bulbs have scared buyers away by costing $20 each; mass manufacturing is bringing the price down to about $12, and it may fall further. The new units make soft light, not glare. At $12, a compact fluorescent will pay back its cost merely via the ten to fifteen incandescent bulbs you can avoid purchasing; the entire energy savings is gravy.

WHY NOT THE BEST? Jimmy Carter's—er—George Bush's National Energy Strategy is better than nothing, but that's about all. Even Watkins concedes that at best the NES will cut primary energy demand by 9 percent over projected growth by the year 2010: a negligible goal. But then efficiency measures "would achieve conservation by limiting choices and requiring Americans to change their lifestyles, and we disagree" with that frightening notion, Watkins said.

Why not replace the tired old NES policies with some freshness, some energy? It is difficult to believe that Americans are so selfish they think it is fine for government to order U.S. soldiers to make the ultimate sacrifice in the Gulf but would be outraged if they were asked to sacrifice one second off their car's acceleration time. Non-ideological energy efficiency would indeed "change lifestyles." It offers Americans lifestyles better than the ones they enjoy today: cozy homes and big private cars in an environment that is cleaner and an economy that is more internationally competitive.

This last reflects the most puzzling aspect of the Bush plan. Energy is not a gloomy, intractable problem like the budget deficit or welfare reform. Energy policy is a tunnel with a bright, beckoning light at the end. Everything that's wrong with U.S. fuel use can be fixed fairly quickly at reasonable cost, even at a profit. All that's required is leadership in something other than war. ●

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

High Spirits and Low

In 1969 the young Czech director Jiří Menzel finished a new film. It satirized Communist rule. The Soviets had invaded Czechoslovakia. The film was promptly locked up. In 1971, Josef Škovorecký, who had worked with Menzel previously, wrote: "The few who saw the film maintain that it is the best work Menzel has ever done." Now at last it has its American theatrical premiere (at the Film Forum in New York), and if it is not Menzel's best work—his first feature, *Closely Watched Trains*, is a firmer organism—it's a bittersweet delight. And of course it carries with it an aura of sanctity because of its history, or non-history, up to now.

Larks on a String (Ifex) is mostly set in a junkyard, in the early 1950s when Stalinism prevailed. To this yard all kinds of metal scrap are brought: automobiles, bedsteads, typewriters, large metal crucifixes. These items are to be melted down to make new steel for the new republic. Furthering the patent metaphor is the crew of men who have been put to work there—among them, a philosophy professor, a public prosecutor who believes in justice, a saxophonist whose instrument has been declared decadent. Also working in the yard is a crew of female prisoners—all young, all political—who are kept at a distance by a guard. Among the women is a particular beauty, quite shy. Among the men is a young cook, played by Vaclav Neckár, who was the youth in *Closely Watched Trains*.

Out of these characters, including the guard, Menzel and Bohumil Hrabal have spun a screenplay based on short stories by the latter. (A novel of Hrabal's was the basis of Menzel's earlier feature.) The first pleasant point about the picture is that the screenplay is light-fingered and ruefully funny—a scherzo on dark themes. (In retrospect, the picture's imprisonment for twenty years is almost part of the film itself.) Then there is Menzel's direction, never cute but always brimming with mocking naïveté, consciously wide-eyed without being cloying. He moves around that junkyard as if it were a field of daisies.

The actors complete the film's being with the right mélange of Middle European flavors: the mildly venturesome Neckár; the modestly frank young woman; the quiet ex-professor who comments on what happens as if he were a spectator, although his remarks, as he knows, will result in his own arrest; the guard whose marriage and marital misadventures counterpoint the central romance. All are actors in a grim comedy of an attempt to program human beings. (The title, I assume, refers to captive birds or to a hunter's catch.)

Toward the end, after a furtive courtship amid the metal scrap, Neckár and his adored are married—by proxy. She is still in detention camp. Then, just as she is released, he utters some irreverent remarks to a visiting fake-benign old dignitary, and he goes into the clink. Consummation of the marriage is still delayed by some months, but delayed consummations are part of the theme. (Furthered unwittingly by subsequent delayed consummation between the film and its audience.)

The color registration is not consistent throughout, but we're told that some scenes were cut by censors and had to be replaced with excerpts from the lone extant print. Still, if ever concessions are to be made to films, this is one of them. *Larks on a String* was begun in the period of the so-called Czechoslovak Film Miracle, 1963-69, but it was finished in a less miraculous era. The irrepressible humor of Menzel and his colleagues, in the face of dreariness and worse, is as affecting as the film itself. I'm obliged to add that the little I've seen of Menzel's subsequent work is not up to the level of this film and his first feature.

The color in **Scenes from a Mall** (Touchstone) is very good—Fred Murphy is a front-rank cinematographer—but it couldn't matter less. Paul Mazursky, who directed and co-wrote it, is back in stride again—back making pictures of pseudo-depth, pseudo-humane concern. His last film was the fine *Enemies: A Love Story*, an anomaly in his career because of the excellent texture it drew from I. B. Singer's novel, its superb acting, and despite the florid outbursts that were part of it, a quiet confidence in the rightness and style of what was being done. But *Scenes from a Mall* is back in the Mazursky line of *Blume in Love*, *Tempest*, *An Unmarried Woman*, and more—glitzy hothouse products full of Hollywood sincerity.

Mazursky says he was struck one day by the idea for this new film, and with the help of Roger L. Simon, who co-adapted *Enemies* with him, he fashioned a screenplay. The idea that struck Mazursky was to spend a day with a well-to-do LA couple

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The End of Innocence. *Forgive the trite script—about a woman damaged by emotional abuse who recovers through therapy—and you can enjoy Dyan Cannon's performance, plus her directing debut. (Reviewed 2/11/91)* **The Godfather: Part III.** *It's not unbearably worse than the first two films about this very rich family of moral degenerates. (1/21/91)* **The Silence of the Lambs.** *The screenplay unravels, but Anthony Hopkins, as a suave psychiatrist who is also a cannibalistic killer, is impressive—as are Jonathan Demme's direction and Tak Fujimoto's lighting. (2/18/91)* **The Vanishing.** *A highly intelligent, excellently made thriller, from the Dutch director George Sluizer. The suspense is not in who did it, but why. And what will follow from it. Exceptional. (3/4/91)* **—SK**

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about 40, a day that ranges from harmony through disharmony and back to harmony, with most of it taking place in an immense multilevel shopping mall, including one of the two times the couple make love. (In a mall movie theater, which is showing *Salaam Bombay!* Thus, we may gather, do Americans respect a chronicle of poverty and injustice.)

Every bit of the picture is equally unaffecting. This is America, folks, the film says, as it revels in the very culture it pretends to be satirizing. The background—it's Southern California Christmastime—of carolers and Santa and consumerism gone rampant is laid on with a rhinestone-handled trowel. The quarrels between husband and wife are laboriously padded as preparation for the predictable reconciliations. As for the laughs, the only one for me was when Wifey, in a heated moment, knees Hubby in the groin. A hint, perhaps, of Mazursky's—and my—desperation.

The wife is played by Bette Midler, chunkier than ever, who is apparently forsaking the "commentary" acting she used to do. In *Outrageous Fortune*, for instance, she seemed, in quasi-Brechtian style, to be putting her performance in quotation marks. Which is why I was glad when she acquired rights to the biography of the veteran Brechtian, Lotte Lenya. But that film is not forthcoming. Midler has been wallowing in melodramatic slop like *Beaches* and *Stella* and now opts for its comic equivalent.

Her husband is played by Woody Allen, who is dreadful. But it's worse than that. When Allen plays parts that he writes for himself, he can sometimes partly disguise his limitations and make the most of his comic shtick. In those films his acting at least seems part of the Woody Allen package. But when he presents himself solely as actor, even though the part was presumably written for him and he probably touched it up, his effrontery is a bit repellent. Stripped of the holistic Allen package, he's revealed baldly in all his whining, shrugging, kinetically stuttering inadequacy. ●

Robert Brustein on Theater

In the Belly of 'La Bête'

Stuart Ostrow, producer of David Hirson's **La Bête** at the Eugene O'Neill Theater, is gaining a reputation as the Don Quixote of Broadway, not for his defiance of the commercial system, but rather—and this is a paradox—for trying to restore some of its abandoned values. He is quixotic in his determination to produce plays only if he believes in them. And he stubbornly refuses to cycle his shows (as even Neil Simon does now) through the resident theater circuit, preferring the traditional method of producing in out-of-town theater districts before opening in New York. With *M. Butterfly*, this strategy succeeded because the work was a mixture of middlebrow ointments, an attractive concoction to those seeking light mental massage. With the more demanding *La Bête*, however, he has run into a hailstorm of hostile reviews and is fighting a losing battle to keep the play open.

It is engaging to think that a comedy of manners written in the manner of Molière—or rather of Richard Wilbur's translations of Molière—could be assumed to have a chance of surviving on Broadway without benefit of a star. (Ron Silver departed the show in Boston.) For one thing, it is composed in rhymed iambic couplets. For another, it is a highly literate jeu d'esprit about a seventeenth-century acting company residing (like Molière's early troupe and including some of its more famous members) at the estate of Prince [de] Conti in Pezenas, France. This is hardly the stuff of Broadway dreams, though the play will undoubtedly become a staple in future schedules of non-profit theater companies. Its appeal is limited largely to educated audiences with some background in dramatic literature who, I sense, will prove enthusiastic, if not fanatical, about its virtues.

As a member of that species, I am moderately attracted to *La Bête*, though it strikes me as a bit of a stunt. I feel much more excited about its author, David Hirson. Anyone capable of simulating so well the wit and the style of another dramatist has the essential gift of mimesis, and is capable of applying it not just to literature but to life. Hirson is a young American of 33 with a background in scholarship (studying at Yale and Oxford); his only other work is an adaptation of a Scarlatti comic opera.

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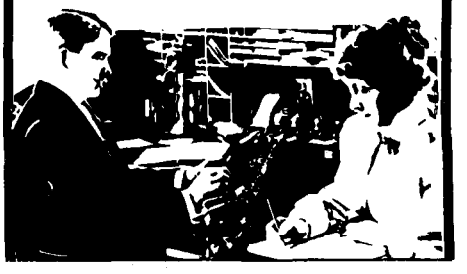

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He seems to be steeped in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries rather as Maxwell Anderson was steeped in the Elizabethan period, but the result is a headier brew and a more authentic evocation of an age. Anderson was less poet than poetaster, creating a club-footed blank verse that approached sublimity only in the lyrics of "September Song." Hirson has an acerbic tongue and a superb ear, possibly trained by readings in Alexander Pope (*La Bête* also bears a resemblance to the *Dunciad*). Though not dissimilar from Prokofiev's ambitions in his *Symphonie Classique*, the play is essentially the work of a virtuoso interpreter rather than an original creative artist, undertaken with such energy and éclat that in the belly of *La Bête* lies a wholly convincing neoclassical artifact.

Hirson, however, has not succeeded in fashioning a convincing neoclassical plot or fully fleshed Molièrian characters. *La Bête* is a situation rather than an action about the intrusion into a dedicated theater company—led by the actor-playwright Elomire (a conscious anagram)—of a self-regarding troubadour named Valere. Just as Elomire resembles not so much the good-natured Molière as the sour Alceste, so Valere reminds us of *Le Misanthrope*'s invincibly smug Oronte, and almost the entire first act is taken up with a twenty-five-minute monologue by this self-infatuated self-promoter, as Elomire and his friend Bejart look on in disgust. Much of the second act consists of performing his ridiculous play, "The Parable of Two Boys From Cadiz," using actors from the company at Prince Conti's behest. Valere is wholly preoccupied with language—or rather with defiling language. He has invented a term, "verbobos," to describe his ugly neologisms, and he is eager to pass off his play as a comment on the way mediocrity is eclipsing excellence in France, unconscious that his own work is a prime example.

Enchanted by Valere, the Prince wants him in the company—over Elomire's strenuous objections. When Elomire makes the case that Valere's parable represents the very mediocrity the play is condemning, Conti rebukes him testily for daring to lecture a Prince. After he orders Elomire to accept Valere in his troupe, Elomire decides to resign. The opportunistic actors, fearful of losing a comfortable refuge, abandon him. In an epilogue, Elomire chooses penury and exile rather than compromise his artistic principles:

> Does any way less radical exist
> To keep ideals from being trivialized?
> The only way I know is to *resist*;
> Autonomy cannot be compromised.

The tone is a bit shrill, the expression a touch self-righteous, and Elomire the moral creative artist is nowhere near as engaging as Valere the amoral creative opportunist. (Molière had more complicated feelings about his own uncompromising idealist Alceste, believing that such fanatics, while praiseworthy for their principles, have the capacity to destroy society.) I also wish the playwright had done more with another of his characters, Madeleine Bejart, who in actuality was Molière's mistress and the adoptive mother of his wife, Armande. Still, it is clear that Hirson is frying bigger fish than seventeenth-century poets and poetasters, that officially endorsed mediocrity is a theme he trusts we will recognize as familiar.

La Bête has been given an extremely finished production by that master of surfaces, Richard Jones. Abetted by the extraordinary sets and costumes of his close collaborator Richard Hudson, Jones has tilted the play in a manner that positions the actors in a world of bizarre proportions. A series of drops on which are scribbled *Blah blah blah* prepare us for Valere's mutilation of the language, and the terrific white set, virtually empty except for gold scallop shell chairs and classical busts and Jennifer Tipton's blazing lighting, gives us a crazy sense of entrapment in forced perspective. The costumes are utterly outrageous, both in shape and color—the Prince's ermined train is so long it has to be carried behind him by four footmen. And the performances proceed at a manic pace that tests the speed and agility of the human tongue.

Among these performances there are splendid turns, particularly by Michael Cumpsty as a glowering Elomire, Johann Carlo as a tongue-tied Dorine, and Dylan Baker as Conti, a prince with rotten teeth, alternately gracious and grating, effete and offensive. As Valere, Tom McGowan was entrusted with a hugely difficult starring role on very short notice; he should be cited for valor. An actor of sizable proportions expanded by a massive wig, McGowan preens around stage in leopard pantaloons, giving an entertaining performance, at times an irrepressible one—like a shameless drama student in a solo cabaret or a loquacious queen dominating a party. If he seems at times to be inhabiting the part less than rending and shredding it—if there's something just a bit frightened hovering behind his eyes—that's understandable given the abruptness of the assignment.

I enjoyed myself at this show. I hope its inevitably brief run, and potential losses, don't discourage Ostrow from taking further risks—and I hope one of them will be Hirson's next play. It's not often that an American writer displays such a passion for language or the gifts with which to celebrate it. One must use these words hesitantly in a profession where success is measured by money, but regardless of its commercial fate, *La Bête* represents the successful debut of an auspicious talent.

Assassins is the latest work of another auspicious talent, Stephen Sondheim, who wrote the music and lyrics to a book by John Weidman. In its present incarnation at Playwrights Horizons, it is a singularly bizarre performance. Sondheim has never been known for timidity in choosing material for musicals. *Sweeney Todd*, after all, was about a barber who sold off the dismembered parts of his murdered victims for consumption at dining room tables. With *Assassins*, however, he has chosen to memorialize tunefully the careers of that coterie of killers who aimed a variety of lethal weapons at the hides of American presidents, with John Wilkes Booth presiding as the tutelary spirit. People have reacted to his project like the stunned audience in Mel Brooks's *The Producers*, paralyzed by "Springtime for Hitler" sung by a chorus of high-stepping Nazis.

The difference is that Zero Mostel was purposely trying to achieve a flop; Sondheim's flop was thrust upon him. But what could he expect when he begins his show with a carny singer in a shooting gallery warbling, "Hey, pal, come here and kill a president," and ends it with the sentiment that "everybody's got the right to be different. . . . Everybody's got the right to their dreams." One suspects that irony is intended. In fact, the disjunction between form (musical comedy) and content (murder) leaves the evening dripping with irony, not all of it conscious. Sondheim's songs, for the most part, could be detached from their context and handed to disc jockeys, arousing the disquieting impression that these aberrant historical figures have been resurrected partly for the sake of selling platinum records. The assassins of *Assassins* are lurking in Tin Pan Alley.

Weidman's perfunctory book tracks the careers of John Wilkes Booth (who shot Lincoln), Charles Guiteau (who killed Garfield), Leon Czolgosz (who assassinated McKinley), Guiseppe Zangara (who tried to kill FDR), Samuel Byck (who planned to crash a plane into Nixon's White House), Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme and Sara Jane Moore (who both made attempts on Ford), and John Hinckley (who shot Reagan). The show concludes with Lee Harvey Oswald in the Texas Book Depository. *Assassins* contends that the

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common motive of all these people was a passion for notoriety, that Booth, for example, "killed a country because of bad reviews" ("Lincoln, who got mixed reviews, because of you now gets only raves"). Not political conviction, then, but celebrity is the spur, a view that even informs the scenes in which Booth persuades Oswald to eschew suicide and make a name for himself instead ("You can close the New York Stock Exchange"). It is history seen through the eyes of show business. What is difficult to determine is how much of this is intended as mockery. Ironies begin to cohere only in the scenes featuring the incompetent failures. An imaginary encounter between Squeaky Fromme (Annie Golden) and Sara Moore (Debra Monk) is genuinely funny, replete with Manson stories and a shared love of Kentucky Fried Chicken, and so is the passion of Samuel Byck (Lee Wilkof in a Santa Claus suit) for Bernstein musicals. Still, the whole enterprise seems a little desperate, as does the staging of the normally confident Jerry Zaks. Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* provided much more insight into the motives of political assassins, and Altman's *Nashville* accompanied such insights with better music. ●

Gay studies and the academic appetite for sex.

Telling It Slant

BY CHRISTOPHER BENFEY

"Difficult as it will be," Walt Whitman wrote in *A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads*, his freewheeling essay of 1887, "it has become, in my opinion, imperative to achieve a shifted attitude . . . towards the thought and fact of sexuality, as an element in character, personality, the emotions, and a theme in literature. I am not going to argue the question by itself; it does not stand by itself." To bring about such a "shifted attitude" toward sexuality is the explicit goal of much recent literary criticism. Whether its methods and ideas are of the kind that would gratify Whitman is not at all certain. But he would find cause for celebration, I think, in the frankness with which "the thought and fact of sexuality" can now be discussed, at least in academia, especially with regard to the subject of male "adhesiveness" or "comradeship," which he found it necessary to be so evasive about during his lifetime. For Whitman knew what he risked: six years earlier the Boston district attorney had threatened Whitman's publisher with an obscenity suit for the sixth edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

But if, as Whitman says, the question of sexuality does not "stand by itself," what exactly does it stand with? New fields of academic endeavor have flourished in this vast and amorphous terrain: first, the now well-established field of gender studies, and more recently the related field of gay studies. These disciplines drew some of their initial energy from the women's movement and the gay rights movement respectively; they were frankly and unashamedly *engagé*. But each has since developed a momentum, and intellectual orthodoxies, of its own. Though much of the work in gender and gay studies is interdisciplinary, ranging among older subjects such as art history, sociology, and social history, literary critics have found issues of sexuality particularly seductive. And so gender and sexual preference have joined those other Procrustean gauges of human difference that rule our universities: race, social class, and ethnicity. We live in differentiating times.

Epistemology of the Closet
by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick
(University of California Press, 258 pp., $24.95)

Disseminating Whitman: Revision and Corporeality in 'Leaves of Grass'
by Michael Moon
(Harvard University Press, 249 pp., $32.50)

Hart Crane and the Homosexual Text: New Thresholds, New Anatomies
by Thomas E. Yingling
(University of Chicago Press, 282 pp., $39.95, $15.95 paper)

The best work in gender studies (particularly by social historians) has shown how gender is interconnected with such other factors as money, temperament, childhood experience, and racial prejudice in affecting people's lives. Literary critics, however, tend to have a more circumscribed outlook, and to seek a single key to the many locks of a literary text. And so problems emerge, especially when sexuality is considered *the* crucial factor in understanding a writer's work, when it is allowed, contrary to Whitman's warning, to "stand by itself." As with any reductive approach, such single-track interpretations skew our sense of how literature comes to be written and eclipse those many aspects of verbal art that are not obviously marked by sexuality. Given the extraordinary prestige of gender studies, and the growing field of gay studies, we need to ask whether these new coordinates are being used to enlarge and to complicate our understanding of literary texts, or to narrow it.

Three recent contributions to gay studies should allow us to take some soundings in this suddenly expanding field. For purposes of comparison, it is convenient that all three purport to have something fresh to say about canonical American writers. They do not seek to challenge the canon of accepted authors; they're happy to find Whitman, Henry James, Willa Cather, and Hart Crane there. They prefer, instead, to question the ways in which gay writers have become canonical: specifically, by having their sexual preference denied, concealed, minimized, or in other ways "closeted." Each of the three books—or "projects," as these writers insist on calling them ("I want to begin my project," Michael Moon writes, "of situating the *Leaves of Grass* project in its political and historical contexts . . .")—is in certain ways insightful and provocative, and in other ways tedious and disturbing.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who is widely regarded as one of the founders of gay literary theory, cuts a stylish, even flamboyant, figure in literary studies. She has supplemented her critical writing with a much-discussed series of autobiographical essays, one of which describes her early, imaginatively linked experiences of writing poetry and getting spanked—"the two most rhythmic things that happened" to her as a child. There's a trace of this side of her work early on in *Epistemology of the Closet*, when she tries to explain why the world of gay men holds such an attraction for her, why she's such a connoisseur of closets: "I can say generally that the vicarious investments most visible to me have had to do with my experiences as a woman; as a fat woman; as a non-procreative adult; as someone who is, under several different discursive

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regimes, a sexual pervert; and, under some, a Jew." The coy combination of specificity and vagueness is characteristic of Sedgwick's way of "coming out." It is an oddly ambiguous procedure for a critic who is bent on unmasking the sexual bases of other writers' works.

In her extremely influential book, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire,* which appeared in 1985, Sedgwick argued that nineteenth-century British culture was built on the strongest possible bonds between men (of friendship, mentorship, camaraderie of the workplace, and so on), which necessitated, for economic and social reasons, equally strong prohibitions against homosexual acts. The resulting confusions between prescribed "homosocial" bonds and proscribed "homosexual" bonds left many men baffled—or, as Sedgwick puts it, in a state of "homosexual panic." It's a neat little theory, if an unlikely one. It characterizes British society as homosexual in everything but acts, and presupposes a picture of male sexuality as supremely manipulable and supremely insatiable. (It bears an obvious resemblance to the old theories about the impossibility of true friendship between men and women, on the grounds that we all know what men really want.)

Between Men also suggested that sexual orientation is socially determined or, as it is now fashionable to say, socially constructed. In her new book Sedgwick backs off from this position, though she is now prepared to make even wider claims for the pervasive power of sexuality in our culture. While *Epistemology of the Closet* is less unified (and harder to summarize) than *Between Men,* Sedgwick again builds her arguments around a basic tension, this time between two views of male homosexuality that she discerns in contemporary culture. One, which she calls "minoritizing," takes homosexuality to be a fixed, more or less innate attribute of a distinct minority of people, namely homosexuals. The other, "universalizing," view assumes that homosexual traits are a potential capacity of everybody. Sedgwick associates the first view with gay rights activism, the second with, among others, Freud. While she obviously leans toward the "universalizing" or constructivist view, she worries about how such a view can play into the hands of right-wingers and fundamentalists who want to "cure" an acquired and not innate homosexuality.

Sedgwick's second major point follows from her first, and from how deeply she believes our sexual confusions undergird our anxious and homophobic society. Her "project," she now argues, is potentially as wide as all of modern Western culture:

> *Epistemology of the Closet* proposes that many of the major nodes of thought and knowledge in twentieth-century Western culture as a whole are structured—indeed, fractured—by a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male, dating from the end of the nineteenth century. The book will argue that an understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo-heterosexual definition; and it will assume that the appropriate place for that critical analysis to begin is from the relatively decentered perspective of modern gay and anti-homophobic theory.

This passage is typical of the level of abstraction at which Sedgwick's argument is pitched, especially in her rather cavalier cultural claims. For what constitutes "twentieth-century Western culture as a whole," and is Sedgwick, is anyone, really equipped to speak of it? Sexuality obviously has a bearing on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century novels of romantic entanglement that are her preferred examples. (She stays away from poetry, no doubt because its traditions are often based on impulses other than sexual ones.) But what of music and mathematics? And what of the natural sciences, which are surely part of "modern Western culture"? Is she prepared to argue that we can't understand optics or geology or engineering without a homo/heterosexual analysis?

When Sedgwick tries to be more specific about what these "major nodes of thought and knowledge" might be, the result is a banal list of distinctions that she fancily calls "binarisms":

> I'll argue that the now chronic modern crisis of homo-heterosexual definition has affected our culture through its ineffaceable marking particularly of the categories secrecy/disclosure, knowledge/ignorance, private/public, masculine/feminine . . .

and so on. A little further down the list—Sedgwick likes lists—one finds "same/different" and "in/out." But is the distinction between "in" and "out" really "ineffaceably marked" by the distinction between homosexual and heterosexual? And how would one go about demonstrating such an extraordinary view? Sedgwick, however, revels in her own vagueness: "A point of the book is *not to know* how far its insights and projects are generalizable."

Sedgwick's historical assertions are equally extreme, and unsubstantiated. Like other gay theorists, she assumes that the concept of "the homosexual" as a particular kind of person (as opposed to a set of proscribed acts such as sodomy and pederasty) is a late development in Western culture. While homoeroticism pervaded whole cultures—ancient Greece, for example—the distinction between homosexuals and heterosexuals came much later, in 1870, according to Foucault. "It was this new development," she writes, "that left no space in the culture exempt from the potent incoherences of homo-heterosexual definition."

Still, she is vague about the consequences of such a momentous shift, especially for those people henceforth categorized as "heterosexual." Did heterosexuals really, from the late nineteenth century onward, define themselves primarily as distinguished from homosexuals? And her attempt to be more precise about the dating of, and the reasons for, this shift appears to rest on the centrality of the trial of Oscar Wilde—a datum that seems, for all its notoriety in London and Paris and New York, somehow rather localized. Did such a shift occur at the same time in Rome? In Moscow? In Stockholm?

To the extent that Sedgwick does offer a demonstration of the depth of the divide between homosexual and heterosexual in modern culture, it rests on her interpretations of several familiar texts, including Melville's *Billy Budd,* Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle," and Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu.* In the course of these readings Sedgwick attempts to probe the "binarisms" and "fractures" at the heart of Western culture. She is a penetrating, often brilliant reader, alert to the subtlest shifts in a writer's verbal register. Her examination of the tense, sexually charged triangle of Billy Budd, Claggart, and Captain Vere is particularly acute. Still, the texts she has chosen are not, after all, surprising ones; she boasts at one point that her analysis would "work just as well—even better—for Joyce, Faulkner, Lawrence, Yeats, etc.," but there's no one to call her bluff.

The subtlety of Sedgwick's readings, moreover, often leads to rather heavy-handed conclusions. Her blunt discussion of James's great story is a case in point. The protagonist of "The Beast in the Jungle," John Marcher, shares the secret of his life with May Bartram. He feels, and she encourages him in feeling, that he is reserved for some terrible event, and that he must keep himself free—and unmarried—to meet it. After a lifetime of waiting, he discovers, to his horror, that the terrible fate reserved for him was precisely to have waited: "The fate he had been marked for he had met with a vengeance—he had emptied the cup to the lees; he had been the man of

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his time, *the* man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened."

The story has traditionally been read, as Sedgwick points out, as a parable of the artist's life, of how the artist is forced to choose (in Yeats's phrase) "perfection of the life, or of the work." Marcher's tragedy, in this view, is that in refusing to marry May Bartram he missed his chance at a full life. But this, according to Sedgwick, is a patently "phobic" reading. She argues that Marcher's conflict is a sexual one. Faced with the "compulsory heterosexuality" demanded by his culture, Marcher wavers, hesitates, stalls. Unable to acknowledge his own homoerotic proclivities, he is incapable of fully embracing a heterosexual or a homosexual identity for himself. So far, Sedgwick's reading is at least remotely plausible, though hardly as self-evident as she claims.

In a rather bizarre turn in her argument, however, Sedgwick suggests that May is trying to liberate poor conflicted Marcher:

> I hypothesize that what May Bartram would have liked for Marcher, the narrative she wished to nurture for him, would have been a progress from a vexed and gaping self-ignorance around his homosexual possibilities to a self-knowledge of them that would have freed him to find and enjoy a sexuality of whatever sort emerged.

This may or may not be May's aim; James's narrative shields us from her point of view. Still, it is clearly Sedgwick's aim. Her upbeat suggestion—"that would have freed him to find and enjoy a sexuality of whatever sort emerged"—is precisely the sort of utopian, therapeutic solution that James would have rejected.

Sedgwick has no difficulty in analyzing James in the same cavalier manner in which she examines his character Marcher—indeed, she all but identifies the two. Of James's "intense, but peculiarly furtive, intimacies" with the American author Constance Fenimore Woolson, she remarks: "James's mistake here, in life, seems to have been in moving blindly from a sense of the good, the desirability, of love and sexuality to the automatic imposition on himself of a specifically *hetero*sexual compulsion" (her emphasis). Poor benighted fellow; he lived a century too soon. It is as though Henry's brother William has taken over here: a good dose of "healthy-mindedness" would cure all Henry's little evasions and hesitations, and make him a hearty kind of guy.

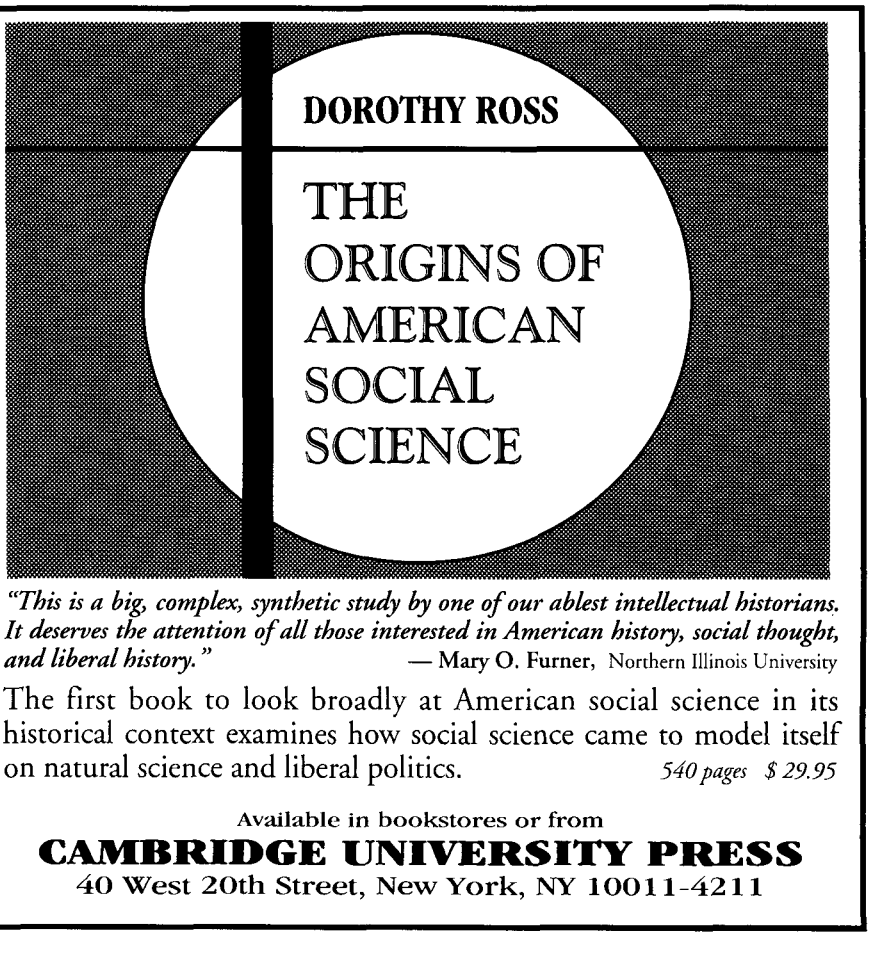
Sedgwick has an exorbitant style to match her exorbitant arguments. She admits that "the style of [her] writing will not conform to everyone's ideal of the pellucid." For once she understates the case. She writes in a mode one might call academic Gothic (her first book was called *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*), in which all metaphors are promiscuously mixed. She finds a "hammeringly tendentious blur" in James criticism, and mentions a character's "emotional geology of pliant sweetness fundamented by unyielding compulsion." We encounter "cyclonic epistemological undertows" and a "pseudo-opposition that had come by the middle of the nineteenth century to be cripplingly knotted into the guts of British men and, through them, into the lives of women." Sedgwick is master of the colorful adverb: "a hatingly crystallized literalization," "tremblingly vulnerable," "excruciatingly seamless."

If formal acknowledgments can be trusted, Sedgwick's influence has been pervasive among younger gay critics. Both Michael Moon and Thomas Yingling express their profound indebtedness to her work. (And Sedgwick thanks Moon, who, she remarks obscurely, "came late to the scene of this writing and substantially transformed it, fulfilling our foray.") Both critics follow Sedgwick in their vehement rejection of "universalizing" readings of gay writers. They share her conviction that such interpretations—say, that "The Beast in the Jungle" is about "the artist"—too easily elide the universal with the heterosexual. But their relentlessly particularizing monographs on Whitman and Crane respectively are refreshingly specific in their concerns, though occasionally immodest in their claims. Each illuminates the poetry under discussion, as well as the fraught milieu in which that poetry came to be written.

The two books have similar stories to tell. Both Whitman and Crane, we learn, began their careers with relatively bold and undisguised representations of their sexual preferences. And both found that their success as public men of letters demanded a more disguised approach. As Crane remarked in 1923, early in his career:

> I discover that I have been all-too-easy all along in letting out announcements of my sexual predilections. Not that anything unpleasant has happened or is imminent. But it does put me into obligatory relations of a certain extent with "those who know," and this irks me to think of sometimes. . . . I find the ordinary business of earning a living entirely too stringent to want to add any prejudices against me *of that nature.*

Both Moon and Yingling argue that a certain vagueness (or, as it is now fash-



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ionable to say, "indeterminacy") had its uses for these poets, who felt restricted in what they could say about sexuality, especially about sexual practices and fantasies that society regarded as deviant or perverse. Both argue, unconvincingly, that a conspiracy of critics has kept those restrictions in place, so that modern readers have had difficulty deciphering Whitman and Crane. And finally both claim, by highlighting homoerotic themes and strategies, to have cracked the codes perfected by these poets.

Disseminating Whitman, despite its boldly allusive title, is a rather tame book in its argument, as well as in its joyless prose. Moon argues that the first four editions of *Leaves of Grass*, from the 1855 edition to that of 1867, coincided with "perhaps the period of the most intense political conflict and significant social transformation in American history to date." It is a claim that many historians would disagree with, placing the date of maximum transformation roughly forty years later. But Moon, like Sedgwick, is primarily concerned with changes in the sexual climate of American society, which, he believes, turned a permissive, "homosocial" society (Moon borrows Sedgwick's term) into a homophobic one.

Whitman, according to Moon, regretted specifically the replacement of earlier modes of apprenticeship by new and more alienating arrangements, with the consequent eradication of the physical camaraderie of master, apprentice, and journeyman:

> Long-established modes of training young persons to inhabit gradually their respective gender roles as well as (in conjunction with) other social roles had become outmoded in Whitman's youth, and many persons seem to have found the perhaps no less homosocial but nonetheless very different modes that replaced them in the early industrial- and commercial-capitalist United States relatively brutal and unsatisfying, and, ultimately, destructive and deforming. It is a corollary assumption of my project that one chief design of the successive editions of *Leaves of Grass* was to counter the privatizing, standardizing, domesticizing, misogynist, and homophobic social arrangements of industrial, and commercial, and (in the post-Civil War era) corporate capitalism that eventually replaced earlier arrangements.

There is much to question in this package of unsubstantiated assumptions, not least its picture of a sort of golden age of male camaraderie that preceded the rapid rise of American commercial culture. Were masters really so cozy with their apprentices, and didn't such arrangements produce their own varieties of brutality? Moon (like Sedgwick) exhibits, here and elsewhere, one of Foucault's less helpful bequests to Americanists: a tendency to invent, on the slightest evidence, bold periodizations and massive shifts in American culture.

In any case, Moon argues that what Whitman did, first in his early prose sketches and then in the successive editions of *Leaves*, was to find ways of disguising his real subject, the allure of the male body, and to find ways of opposing "the increasingly phobic attitude to men's taking pleasure in their own and in other men's bodies." Moon shows convincingly how Whitman used contemporary discussions of the dangers of alcohol and "onanism" (a label, Moon remarks, for male homosexuality) for his own purposes, especially in his pervasive imagery of fluids and fluidity. "Whitman was first enabled to write about officially proscribed forms of sexual behavior by employing the vague, capacious, and flexible vocabulary which came to hand from the recklessly metaphorical public discourse of his time," Moon writes, and thus was capable of "encoding 'forbidden' texts in 'permissible' ones."

Moon claims to be able to clear up "most of what have come to be regarded as the interpretive cruxes" of *Leaves* by showing how in such passages "nonprocreative sexual activity, and especially the ejaculation of semen in such activity, is indeterminately figured." Most readers today will find many of Moon's examples less in need of decoding than he claims. "Dash me with amorous wet. . . . I can repay you," one speaker tells the sea; while another notes that "Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs, / Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven." "A literary formalist," Moon remarks derisively, "might be satisfied to read these and other passages like them in the first *Leaves of Grass* as mere thematizations of the topos wet/dry." And what a dry old scarecrow of a formalist he would be; but of course no such formalist exists. He's just a straw man. Or a straight man.

Moon can be equally high-handed when he attacks a real critic, as when he calls the editor Arthur Golden "imperceptive (and/or homophobic) to ignore the phallo-anal language Whitman uses" in the following passage from an early letter:

> Dearly beloved—Moved by the bowels of compassion, and pushed onward by the sharp prickings of conscience, I send you another epistolary gem. . . . Besides, conscience spurs me to a full confession; which generally operates on me like a good dose of calomel on one who has been stuffing immoderately, making a clear stomach and comfortable feelings to take the place of overburdened paunch and rumbling intestines. . . .

But Moon's reading, as far as I can tell, depends on the only obviously "phallo" part of the passage: the word "prickings." He may well be right that the passage is written "under the double stimulus of two kinds of (symbolic) pressure on his [i.e., Whitman's] anus." But this is hardly a definitive reading, to which any "perceptive" reader would assent. Symbolic pressure on the anus seems rather elusive, to say the least. And to suggest that it is homophobic to read the passage in any other way is name-calling, hardly the way to encourage interpretive freedom, or dialogue among critics.

Indeed, throughout his book Moon weakens his case by wildly overstating it. He wants us to read everything in *Leaves of Grass* and related materials through the lens of Whitman's sexuality, even passages like the one above that seem to have more to do with digestion than with sex. In looking at Whitman through only one aperture, Moon has diminished our sense of Whitman instead of enlarging it. His argument would be more compelling if there continued to be, as he claims, a systematic denial of Whitman's sexuality by literary critics. But that battle was won long ago. I have never been in a classroom where it was not assumed that Whitman's erotic imagination was directed toward men. It may be true, as Moon argues, that certain "universalizing" readings have understated Whitman's homoerotic themes. But there are good and bad ways to universalize a writer's work. Whitman's extraordinary appeal as a prophet of freedom extends beyond (though it certainly includes) specifically homosexual freedom. One has only to consider his appeal to artists as different as Isadora Duncan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Czeslaw Milosz.

Hart Crane could afford to be less hooded about his sexuality than Whitman, who, when pressed late in his life about his homosexuality, denied it vehemently, claiming that he'd fathered six illegitimate children. Despite considerable prejudice against homosexuals during the 1920s, there was, as Yingling's book makes clear, a flourishing gay culture in large cities such as New York, where a writer like Crane could feel temporarily, if uneasily, at home.

Yingling calls his book "an attempt to correct the almost axiomatic absence of the homosexual from the discourse of American poetry—despite the presence of many canonical gay male poets." He is interested, in particular, in the way that Crane has remained "a canonical figure," even though "his work is almost universally deemed shortsighted, failed,

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or unreadable." Yingling believes that these negative assessments of Crane's work are traceable to his homosexuality in at least two ways: first, since critics are for the most part homophobic, Crane's poems with homosexual themes inevitably seem like failures to straight critics; and second, Crane himself, in an effort to disguise these themes, couched them in increasingly allusive and encoded language.

Some of Yingling's argument seems plausible to me, though I wasn't aware that Crane's poetry is "almost universally" regarded as a failure or as unreadable. I have read it with pleasure for years, and have profited from admiring studies from straight critics as different as Harold Bloom and Alan Trachtenberg, as well as from Warner Berthoff's recent *Hart Crane: A Re-Introduction*. The allegedly homophobic critics that Yingling quotes most fully are Crane's friends and contemporaries Allen Tate and Yvor Winters, two political reactionaries who were predictably offended by Crane's erotic life.

Like Moon with Whitman, Yingling proposes to clear up obscurities in Crane's notoriously dense poetry by showing how homosexual concerns are encoded in them—"to make something of texts that have remained largely impenetrable to straight criticism." He can be a shrewd reader of poetry, as when he examines the stanza from "Recitative" that gave the title "White Buildings" to Crane's first book of poems:

> Look steadily—how the wind feasts and spins
> The brain's disk shivered against lust. Then watch
> While darkness, like an ape's face, falls away,
> And gradually white buildings answer day.

Yingling identifies two main oppositions in the poem: one at the heart of homosexual love during the '20s and one at the heart of gay furtiveness in society. He notes that many homosexuals of Crane's generation saw an absolute and unbridgeable distinction between bestial lust, signified here by the ape's face, and higher Platonic love or friendship. He contrasts the civic order figured in the white buildings with the more permissive realm of "darkness": "If the enclosed space is a privileged site for the homosexual, so too is darkness a cover and the realm of romantic possibility a cruisey street."

But I worry about Yingling's insistence that *all* of Crane's writing should be viewed as "homosexual" in its intentions: "Even when his texts are not 'about' homosexuality, they are instances of homosexual writing." With this injunction, Yingling paints himself into a corner, trying, in his analysis of Crane's early poem "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," to "include an awareness of exactly how and why homosexuality is absent" from it. If critics concerned themselves with what was absent from poems, their work would never be done. In his assertion that all Crane's poetry is somehow colored by his sexual orientation, moreover, Yingling unwittingly repeats the charge of the most homophobic critic imaginable. He has only changed the valuation placed on homosexuality.

Yingling also goes too far when he argues that any reading of Crane that doesn't take homosexuality as central to Crane's art is necessarily homophobic. His flat assertion that "homosexuality was the central experience of Crane's life" may or may not be true. It depends, surely, on what one means by "homosexuality," or, for that matter, by "experience." And one could make a plausible case that poetry, not homosexuality, was Crane's central experience. A poet's primary commitment is to language, and specifically to the inherited forms and conventions through which poetry is expressed. It is true that Whitman was of great importance to Crane, but so were such "straight" poets as Donne and Blake and Dickinson. Indeed, for the kind of poetic forms in which Crane worked, they may have been more influential than Whitman. Yingling does a good job of cracking some of the codes and conundrums of Crane's poetic language, but he has almost nothing to say about the formal aspects of Crane's poetry. The reason, I suspect, is that these forms (the sonnet, the quatrain, and the rest), so central to Crane's poetry, are not readily reducible to sexual orientation.

To ignore issues of form, however, is to ignore the kind of poet Crane was. For Crane, as Berthoff makes clear in his astute monograph, was an obsessive and superb craftsman. Berthoff shows repeatedly how it was that Crane advanced his art by finding specifically formal solutions—in meter, rhyme, assonance, etymology. It is Crane's craft that proved so invigorating for later poets like Robert Lowell and Derek Walcott. And Crane's voluntary submission to the strictures of English prosody raises interesting questions, it seems to me, about the importance of other constraints in his poetry.

Moon and Yingling reveal the extraordinary ingenuity with which Whitman and Crane managed to disguise homoerotic themes in their poetry. It makes one wonder what these poets would have written *without* these restrictions. When Auden's secret and erotically explicit love poems, written in German during the '30s, came recently to light, the surprise was how banal they seemed compared with the more disguised verbal knots of his published poems of the same period. Might the poems of Whitman and Crane similarly take their very energy from eluding certain kinds of censorship, self-imposed or state-imposed? For lyric poetry, more than any other genre, draws its lifeblood from artificial and self-imposed strictures—those of rhyme, meter, stanza shape, the balance of sentence and line-break, and so on. Strictures of theme, of permissible utterance, would simply add to the intensity of the endeavor.

The example of Crane is especially worth pondering. He was surrounded by powerful practitioners of free verse—the very different versions by Eliot and Williams, above all, as well as the earlier example of Whitman—but he wrote most of his best poetry in strict meter and rhyme. He once described himself as "restricted by a single-track, iambic metronometer." The slack language and prosody of an early, relatively undisguised homoerotic poem like "Episode of Hands," in which a "factory owner's son" (as Crane was) binds up the wounded hand of one of the workmen—

> The factory sounds and factory thoughts
> Were banished from him by the larger, quieter hand
> That lay in his with the sun upon it
> And as the bandage knot was tightened
> The two men smiled into each other's eyes.

—yielded to the tenser, equally wounded vision of Crane's great late poem "The Broken Tower," of which I quote only a couple of stanzas:

> And so it was I entered the broken world
> To trace the visionary company of love, its voice
> An instant in the wind (I know not whither hurled)
> But not for long to hold each desperate choice.
>
> My word I poured. But was it cognate, scored
> Of that tribunal monarch of the air
> Whose thigh embronzes earth, strikes crystal Word
> In wounds pledged once to hope—cleft to despair?

Yingling, with his usual reductiveness, claims that the poem is about the impossibility of homosexual love. "As such," he says, the poem "cannot but fail." But aren't some of the greatest English poems about the impossibility of heterosexual love? The important thing is that these stanzas are fully achieved as poetic language. The vision rides on the kin-

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dred sounds of certain words—world, word, poured, scored, word, wound, air and despair—and on the majestic, skillfully enjambed quatrains. It is, to be sure, a vision founded on constraint; but much of the constraint comes precisely from Crane's submission to language itself.

Poetry, alas, thrives on adversity, on what Yeats called "the fascination of what's difficult." If a poet's culture doesn't provide the difficulties, the poet must invent them. This may mean that the happiest societies are not likely to write the best poetry. It may also help to explain why much of the finest American poetry of our century has been written by poets who felt constricted in what they had it in them to say. "Tell all the Truth, but tell it slant—" as Emily Dickinson admonished poets. "Success in Circuit lies."

In their more lucid moments, Sedgwick, Moon, and Yingling manage to lay bare some of the slant circuitry of literary texts, and by extension of cultures, that had been closed to us. Surely, research into the specific homoerotic milieu of Whitman or Crane helps clear up certain obscurities in their poems. And the idea of linguistic codes couching sexual meanings is a helpful one. Other poets, after all, write in kindred codes for political or religious reasons. But whether a whole new discipline has emerged, to which these books claim to make a contribution, is doubtful. Sexuality is, at best, a theme among other themes, in literature as in life.

Nor do these books seem to herald a new methodology, or a distinctively gay way of reading poetry. At best, they make a modest contribution to the old ways. Indeed, these critics are painfully eager to link their "projects" to already established methods: Sedgwick, with her overturned binarisms, to deconstruction; Moon to the cultural "discourses" of the new historicism; and Yingling to avant-garde Marxists like Althusser and Eagleton. Instead of trying to establish their own terms and methods, these books are still trying to "pass" in an academic world rife with orthodoxies.

It is customary in that world to make an argument by overstating it, as though nothing less audible than a shout could reach our ears. In the field of literary criticism, especially, new varieties of interpretation hold the field by scaring others off. With such ground rules, it should not surprise us that Sedgwick, Moon, and Yingling make exorbitant claims—that *all* major nodes of Western thought and culture are permeated by sexuality, that *most* of the obscurities in Whitman hide homoerotic themes, that *all* Crane's poems are examples of "homosexual writing."

Any mode of criticism that claims to reveal everything of importance in a writer's work, by concentrating on one aspect of it, is bound to be reductive. But these three books—with their name calling, their straw men, their conspiracy theories—indulge in something nastier than reductiveness. It's hard to see who benefits from having the poetry of Crane or Whitman, or the stories of Henry James, designated as simply and exclusively "homosexual" in nature, while all other readings are rejected as "homophobic" or "insensitive." The result is a breaking up of literature into little fiefdoms, with small-minded critics jealously guarding their territory.

I suspect that the next move in gay literary studies will be the attempt to read heterosexual writers solely in relation to *their* sexual orientation. Sedgwick seems to promise just that in her sweeping claim that her way of reading James would "work just as well—even better—for Joyce, Faulkner, Lawrence, Yeats, etc." If such readings turn out to be as narrow and as condescending as her discussion of James—and there is every reason to suspect that they will be even more so, considering that ominous "etc."—they present a discouraging, and far from liberating, prospect. ●

Entertainment Industries

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

The Power and the Glitter: The Hollywood-Washington Connection by Ronald Brownstein

(Pantheon, 437 pp., $24.95)

Remember the moment at the Republican Convention in 1984 when Nancy Reagan was at the podium and suddenly her husband's face appeared on a giant TV screen behind her? Ronald (or, since he was on TV and dressed in pajamas, Ronnie) Reagan, who was watching the convention in his hotel room, waved gaily at Nancy. The crowd roared. Nancy expressed (feigned?) puzzlement at what the fuss was about, then turned around, saw Ronnie, and waived gaily back. Watching these two former movie actors bond before a TV audience by watching each other on TV, it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that American politics had been transformed forever—that it had been, to use the word being bandied about at the time, "Hollywoodized." From then on, national elections would be conducted in a manner more reminiscent of a prime-time dramatic series than of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. One of America's great contributions to Western culture, cinema, seemed to have swamped another, democracy.

Now, however, it looks as if that perception was a wild overgeneralization from an unusual set of particulars, sort of like the idea of Woodstock Nation. From the outside at least, the influence of Hollywood on the Bush administration looks to be zero. There are a few celebrities who have well-publicized friendships with the president, like Loretta Lynn and Arnold Schwarzenegger, but these seem to be relationships forged in a spirit of mutual calculation, which have had no effect on the course of the presidency. Hollywood's political causes are either too left-wing to get a serious hearing from this administration (like support of the Christic Institute), or they look like petty special-interest concerns of no interest to the general public (like the Motion Picture Association's effort to keep the networks from owning syndication rights). Could anyone plausibly argue that Hollywood played any historically noteworthy role whatsoever in the government's main undertaking of the last six months, the Gulf war?

The subject of Ronald Brownstein's book, then, is a tricky one. He begins with an introduction portentously titled "The Capital of Glamour and the Capital of Power," which contains a drum-rolling description of a $1,000-a-plate Hollywood fund-raising dinner for Bill Bradley, but on the whole he is too conscientious to oversell the connectedness of Hollywood and Washington. On page 118 we are told, "From the late 1940s through the early 1980s . . . political activity in Hollywood would be episodic and atomized, dependent on floating groups of celebrities who attached themselves to a particular cause or candi-

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date." Then, on page 366, we've hit the *late* 1980s, and:

> In terms of assistance a politician can actually touch, Hollywood's political role remains limited mostly to raising money, attracting crowds and the media (through appearances by celebrities), and occasionally offering some technical assistance. . . .

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, the mid-1980s notwithstanding, the words "episodic and atomized" could be fairly applied to the entire Hollywood-Washington relationship, from the beginning to the present. Every so often in *The Power and the Glitter* it looks as if Hollywood is about to break through to true political power, but there always turns out to be a catch. During World War II the government discovered the immense utility of stars as war-bond salespeople (Kate Smith sold $39 million worth in one radio marathon), but with victory the government's need, and Hollywood's interest, evaporated simultaneously. Arthur Krim, then head of United Artists, now of Orion, became an intimately close adviser to Lyndon Johnson—just at the time when Johnson was deciding not to run for re-election. Warren Beatty acquired more influence "than any Hollywood figure had ever accumulated in a presidential campaign," but it was the 1972 McGovern campaign. In 1988, Gary Hart "assembled more Hollywood resources than any candidate in memory," and then self-destructed.

Entertainment is fast becoming America's leading export industry; it is not merely an interesting but economically insignificant business, like book publishing. It harbors a great many rich people, all of whom are skilled at communicating with the public and many of whom are politically ambitious. It occupies a place close to the center of the American consciousness, a place even closer than politics. The real question posed by the Hollywood-Washington connection is not how the former came to wield such insidious influence over the latter (the favorite question of the columnists); it's why the influence isn't much greater. A book on the relationship between the oil industry and Washington would contain tales of war, economic calamity, national crisis, and presidency-toppling scandal. Even the relationship between the financial-services industry and Washington is pretty dramatic. How can Hollywood's impact have been so tenuous?

Brownstein has researched the politics of Hollywood about as thoroughly as it can be researched—in addition to the results of his many interviews, he cites material contained in five presidential libraries—so it's unlikely that there is an essential clue to the mystery that he's missed. As he tells the story, the politics of Hollywood began on a note familiar from most new industries: the self-made moguls who founded the studios naturally gravitated toward conservatism. Louis B. Mayer of MGM, Brownstein reports, formed a mutual admiration society with Herbert Hoover; Mayer's daughter Irene and David Selznick were received at the White House during their honeymoon.

The Depression and the mass migration of New York scriptwriters to Los Angeles after the introduction of sound deflected Hollywood from the standard (that is, right-wing) political course of a booming entrepreneurial business. The most exhaustively chronicled episode in the political history of Hollywood is surely the flowering and then the banishment of the Communist Party there. Brownstein covers this, but he points out that liberalism, too, had great success in Hollywood during the age of Roosevelt. The Hollywood Democratic Committee, organized in 1943, was a real political organization of a kind that has barely existed in show business since. It sent out mailings, held rallies, and endorsed candidates for office. One of these was Helen Gahagan Douglas, who with her husband, Melvyn, formed the adored first couple of Hollywood liberalism. She was elected to Congress in 1944, and lost to Richard Nixon when she tried to move up to the Senate in 1948.

Brownstein's own sympathies seem to be with this kind of mainstream political work. His descriptions of lefties like the Hollywood Ten and Jane Fonda are fairly withering. (In Fonda's case, that can be achieved merely by quoting from her infamous 1972 radio broadcasts from Hanoi, such as the statement that American POWs would come home "better citizens than when they left.") But after the death of FDR, who had a theatrical presence and imagination that movie people appreciated (back in the 1920s he tried to sell a screenplay to Adolph Zukor), Hollywood turned away from ordinary Democratic Party politics. In the 1948 election Henry Wallace attracted, according to Brownstein, "far more interest in Hollywood than either Truman or Dewey," and movie-industry politics have been left of the electorate ever since.

Although Brownstein is a little light in his coverage of the conservative show-biz crowd—Bob Hope et al.—there can't be much doubt that he's correct in placing Hollywood's ideological center of gravity

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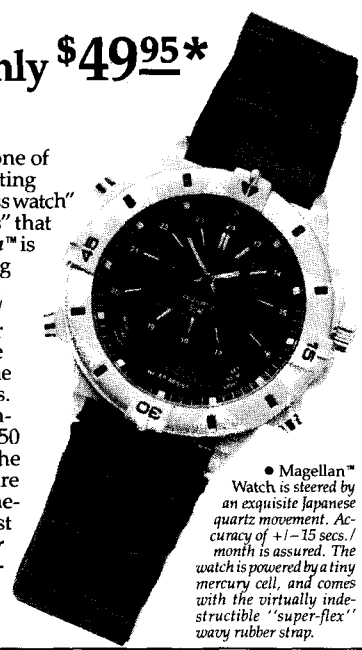

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where he does. The explanations he offers are convincing, too: the industry felt violated by the House Un-American Activities Committee and moved left in reaction; also:

> Accustomed to relying more on emotion than analysis, artists tend to take purist positions on political and social matters. . . . Compelled to compromise constantly in the making of films, Hollywood figures tend to veer toward the other extreme and become purists in politics, as a sort of psychic compensation; people in the industry have always looked to politics as an arena that allows them to demonstrate that they really have deep convictions about something, even if their artistic choices don't display them.

Movie stars, having been inexplicably plucked out of a faceless mass of hard-up, constantly rejected people and showered with bizarrely large sums of money, tend to cling to a self-image that puts them in the spiritual company of the employees of the world, rather than the employers. Writers—well, everybody knows about writers. Producers and studio executives, the Hollywood constituency that might be expected to be conservative, have remained mainly liberal even after becoming affluent. Certainly one important reason why Hollywood isn't more politically influential is that it is not ideologically in tune with the rest of the country.

The coming of television appeared to portend a new political role for Hollywood. In 1952 Dwight Eisenhower, on the quiet, hired Robert Montgomery to teach him how to interact with the tube. But Hollywood didn't permanently add to its portfolio the role of acting coach to politicians; instead, Washington generated its own subindustry to do that. Political admen and TV coaches are now crucial to national politics, but they're independent of show business (and, to mention another connection that once had people worried, of Madison Avenue as well). Several of the leading politicians of the '50s had close links to Hollywood—Adlai Stevenson had Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall on his campaign train; John F. Kennedy socialized, to some extent, with Frank Sinatra's Rat Pack—but these were relationships in which the stars served the politicians and got nothing in return except perhaps a sense of being taken seriously. In the mid-1960s, when Ronald Reagan and George Murphy were elected to the top offices in California, it looked for a while as if more and more ex-actors would become politicians, but that trend fizzled, too.

The most significant structural change in Hollywood-Washington relations came with the collapse of the studio system. When each film became a "deal," rather than an assembly-line product, Hollywood evolved into a town of free-lancers, and this meant that the money from movies and television was spread widely across a community of thousands of actors, writers, directors, and producers, rather than narrowly to a few studio owners. The result was that Hollywood became home to perhaps the largest concentration of rich liberals in the country, and therefore an important fund-raising venue. Liberal politicians began thinking of the movie industry primarily as a source of money. The collapse of the big-city machines as deliverers of liberal votes, the necessity of increasingly big TV time-buys for candidates, and the passage of the campaign-finance laws (which made Hollywood-style networks of thousand-dollar givers more important to politicians by outlawing single-source procurement from plutocrats) all worked in the favor of Hollywood as a political money center.

Although it comes near the end, the heart of *The Power and the Glitter* is Brownstein's description of the Hollywood fund-raising scene. It isn't pretty, unless you're prepared to react favorably to a picture of "driven achievers," each with a Rolodex in one hand and a Filofax in the other, name-dropping manically as they arrange an endless series of high-priced political dinners.

Brownstein maintains that Hollywood fund-raising is in decline, undone by its own self-importance. Presidential candidates find it humiliating to be summoned before Norman Lear and his friends and forced to listen "to the idiosyncratic concerns of a wealthy and isolated elite that pushed them toward the most militant liberal positions on social and foreign policy issues" as a prerequisite to walking away with the bounty of Beverly Hills. Those uninterested in Hollywood, such as Michael Dukakis and George Bush, have found that they were able to raise substantial funds in Los Angeles without trafficking with the entertainment industry at all. Senate and House candidates get in trouble with the folks back home when they are known to

Deep River, Ontario, Population 4,325

for Jeffery Peter Haindl
Born 5 June 1988

We're often homesick, Jeffery, for the place
where we try these mild waters that distill
in time. To stay put's a hard thing the body
can't do for long. Yet there are chimes and chants
you might hear tell of—the trees, the river—
for nights when you must dream yourself to sleep.

What else will remain of this time when sleep
gives way only to what hunger your body
surprises you with? (It means another chance
at that nipple you worry to replace
what Freud defined as our forsaken *Stille.*)
Not at home, it's streams that we're forever

coming back to, when the mind's dark river
begins filtering the silt and the chance
leaves of memory that never stay in place.
Light and faces that flow now past your body—
like shapes on a pendant mobile—while you sleep
are saved there; sometime, in a hostile

world, you'll seek comfort in those fleeting stills.
But how have you come here in the first place?
Small wonder. The hospital at Deep River
was more a sick bay! A few beds for sleep,
a car lot with some cars in it: nobody
but your mother would go there. A good chance

to get comfortable alone. And as chance
would have it, motions of that patient river
weren't lost on you, and the watery sleep
you had just spilled from are within you still.
We see it, as we watch you in your place:
how well you've grasped, more than anybody

here, the quiet, the strangeness of a body
left just beyond you at the door of sleep,
like a child in a basket, quite still,
to raise each morning as your own. A river's
good to keep in mind: whatever you chance
to make of yourself it will have its place,

even if that place should be Come-By-Chance,
Newfoundland, or just your body as it sleeps
off the stillness in the waters by Deep River.

JEFFERY DONALDSON

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be hanging out in Hollywood—even a politician as hip as Hart probably would not have found that his friendship with Beatty was a plus with the voters. And because "most of the fund-raisers" drew from the 1984 presidential election the conclusion "that, if anything, Mondale had been insufficiently liberal in his challenge," there was an inherent mismatch between the kinds of stands on issues that they expected to get in return for their money and what candidates were willing to say on the stump.

Brownstein's beau ideal of a Hollywood political fund-raiser, it appears, is Lew Wasserman, the chairman of MCA, whom he describes in slightly awe-struck tones. Wasserman is much more centrist than the Hollywood Women's Political Caucus, the Hollywood Policy Center, and the like, but the more important difference is that he's a traditional businessman-in-politics. His political agenda is closely related to the needs of his company, and for that reason he gives heavily to all camps (he was a big supporter of both Humphrey and Reagan) in order to maintain access, in the manner of Robert Strauss. Most of the Hollywood money people are ideologically consistent in their giving, and they are most interested in issues that have nothing to do with their own economic interests: Brazilian rain forests, Sandinistas, abortion rights.

Surely this is another part of the explanation for their lack of Washington clout. Those whose involvement in politics is selfless may be admirable, but they generally lack the motivation to reach the apex of business influence over the affairs of government, as John D. Rockefeller did, for example, routinely giving pay-offs to U.S. senators. Even in the current syndication-battle, Japanese-buyout era, Hollywood money is much cleaner than most other political money; savings and loans, for example, are vastly more dependent on government policy, vastly more involved in congressional campaigns, vastly less likely to spend on non-self-interest issues. Hollywood's relative cleanliness goes hand in glove with its short political attention span, and its lack of involvement with lunch-bucket liberal causes like labor and social welfare legislation.

The next political phase for Hollywood, Brownstein says, will involve pulling back from candidates and pushing causes instead. Lear, for example, has started an organization called the Environmental Media Organization, which is "built on the belief that, through its dominant position in the culture, Hollywood can change political attitudes and personal behavior." In part this would involve Hollywood's communicating with the public through the usual channels of political discourse, but doing so with much more skill than politicians; and in part it would mean actually bringing to life the nightmares of the McCarthyites, and systematically infusing movies and television shows with left-liberal propaganda.

Somehow I don't think any of this will amount to much, either. To some extent Hollywood has already politicized entertainment—conservatives often complain about it—but people are still voting for Republicans. Because entertainment is a fragmented and highly market-responsive industry, it's unlikely that absolute political orthodoxy could be imposed on its products. Somebody is always going to be succumbing to the temptation to get rich making shoot-'em-up and martial-arts movies. Anyway, the more profound truth is that even if politics does become increasingly Hollywoodized (meaning, based on the mastery of visual mass communications), that doesn't mean that Hollywood itself will become increasingly involved in politics. In fact, it is mistaken to assume that the way to understand the entertainment aspect of politics is by studying the politics of the entertainment industry. Brownstein has illuminated the latter very well and the former hardly at all, which is possible because they are separate and unrelated phenomena. Washington is perfectly capable of Hollywoodizing itself without any help from Hollywood.

NICHOLAS LEMANN is the author of *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (Knopf).

The Peasants' Prophet

BY ANTHONY GRAFTON

Thomas Muentzer, A Destroyer of the Godless: The Making of a Sixteenth-Century Religious Revolutionary by Abraham Friesen

(University of California Press, 331 pp., $39.95)

In May 1525 Thomas Muentzer awaited Armageddon at Frankenhausen, in Thuringia, at the head of the Eternal League of God, an army of peasants. A passionate preacher and a rebellious theologian, he had joined forces with the thousands of ordinary Germans who rose in 1525 against their princes, their landlords, and, in some cases, the Catholic Church. He assured them that the end of history was at hand. If they followed him, abjured heresy and private property, and attacked the corrupt rulers of church and state, God would help them transform the world and make it just and holy. Since his enormous banner depicted a rainbow, he and his followers took the appearance of a halo around the sun as a sure sign of divine protection and coming victory.

Muentzer promised to catch the enemies' bullets in his sleeves. The peasants, accordingly, refused to hand him over to the Saxon and Hessian princes who confronted them, accompanied by armies of professional soldiers. When battle was joined, the princes' artillerymen fired and Muentzer's followers broke and ran. The mercenaries killed several thousand of them on the spot (estimates range from 4,000 to 8,000) and took 600 more prisoner, a rough and revealing statistical commentary on the sixteenth-century way of dealing with rebels. Muentzer escaped, but he was soon caught in bed in an attic. He was tortured, forced to confess, and executed. After the destruction of the Eternal League, whose members had pledged to purge church and society of their many "tares," the short but violent Peasants' War in central Germany came to an end.

Dozens of historians have dealt with the man and the episode, but their efforts, like Muentzer himself, have produced as much tumult and shouting as calm and enlightenment. Scholars on the left—from Engels to A. M. Smirin, whose book on Muentzer's "popular revolution" won the Stalin Prize, second class, in 1947—have treated him as their heroic precursor, emphasizing his attacks on private property and lamenting the objective conditions of his time, which prevented him from turning the world upside down. He enjoyed the reputation of a secular saint in the late great German Democratic Republic, where on public occasions of all sorts tedious speeches and catchy songs commemorated his heroic efforts to over-

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throw a repressive order. Less doctrinaire students of the revolutionary tradition like Ernst Bloch recognized that Muentzer's enterprise was more theological than social, and considered his concrete plans for a new world less important than his general sense of solidarity with the oppressed; but not even Bloch could resist the temptation to compare him admiringly to recent heroes like Lenin and Liebknecht.

Moderate and conservative historians, by contrast, have seen Muentzer's radicalism not as a heroic achievement, but as a painful symptom. Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium* has introduced two generations of students to the flagellants of the fourteenth century and the radical Reformers of the sixteenth. He describes all of them as "rootless," impoverished urban radicals, prone to ecstatic attacks on authority and convinced that they had divine authorization to root up the power structure by violent, direct action. Small groups preserved these views from the age of the Crusades to that of the Reformation.

Finally, social transformations—landlords' efforts to force more obligations on their prosperous peasantry, early capitalists' efforts to exploit their mines to the full—gave the radicals a large, inflammable public. This they promptly ignited, only to lead its members into catastrophe. Muentzer spent time in and near Bohemia, where radical cadres of the type described by Cohn led a shadowy existence in his day. And he rallied his followers in an extraordinarily violent language of opposition: "Let not your blood-covered sword cool. Forge it, cling-clang, on the anvil of Nimrod. Dash their tower to the ground. As long as they live, it is impossible for you to get rid of human fear."

Cohn and others could easily represent Muentzer as the forerunner of the most virulent forms of modern radicalism. No wonder then that in the West during the 1950s and 1960s Muentzer received as much retrospective psychotherapy as historical empathy from mainline historians. As questions of evaluation took precedence over questions of fact, however, ordinary biographical and historical research into the details of Muentzer's life received less attention than debates over the meaning of his career, and so many details of his education, his preaching, and his career as liturgist and literary revolutionary remain obscure. His formal works and correspondence have not yet been edited as critically as those of Luther or Melanchthon, and until recently little of his writing has been made accessible in translation. Many potentially fascinating sources—such as his marginal annotations in printed books—have not been edited at all, though their existence has long been known.

Abraham Friesen's thoughtful, slow-paced book is traditional in many respects. Like his predecessors, he relies on printed books read in libraries rather than manuscripts found in archives. He, too, seeks less to add new information than to re-evaluate what was already well known, and finds inspiration as much in the concerns of modern historiography as in those of Muentzer's time, as the clashing title and subtitle of his book suggest. And yet, for all its old-fashioned qualities, Friesen's book is revisionist at its core.

Friesen transforms our view of Muentzer by taking him seriously, on his own terms, as an intellectual—that is, as an independent reader and interpreter of the Scriptures, the Fathers, and numerous other theological and historical texts. Previous scholars have looked for a single text, person, or group who could be singled out as the "source" of Muentzer's mature theology of revolution. The West German historian Thomas Nipperdey, for example, argued that Luther himself inspired Muentzer with the belief that only the true Christian who had experienced both despair and faith in his own heart could read the Bible. Other scholars have emphasized Muentzer's debts to the "Zwickau prophets," poor radicals from the troubled Saxon city of Zwickau, whose visions of the end of the world seemed absurd to Luther but helped to start the radical agitation that led to the Peasants' War of 1525.

Friesen assumes, however, that Muentzer, as he always claimed, forged his own history of the church's past and prophetic vision of its future, his own exegesis and theology. By careful analysis of texts located meticulously in time and space, he shows that this assumption can account for Muentzer's development without requiring the intervention of a *theologus ex machina*. He convincingly identifies original threads in the varied and difficult fabric of Muentzer's theology, which is so dense with unassimilated and unexplained biblical citations and so rich in abuse of his opponents as to repel most readers. And he demonstrates that Muentzer's revolutionary vision can be accounted for as an original reworking of elements drawn from four sets of texts he knew. (Friesen supports his identifications of Muentzer's reading, it should be said, not only with conventional textual analysis, but also with some fascinating information about his dealings with his bookseller.)

From the medieval mystic John Tauler, Muentzer drew a sense that true piety was a thing of the spirit that only a few individuals of profound sensibility could feel. Tauler also gave him the related belief that ordinary theologians, who contentedly wrote books about grace without knowing it in their own hearts, resembled monkeys pretending to write and ruining their pens and paper. And the biography of a spiritual "Master," wrongly attached to Tauler's works in the printed edition he used, probably provided his model of the true spiritual life. Muentzer found in the late antique church historians Eusebius and Hegesippus evidence—shaky and corrupt, by modern standards—that the church had remained pure for only a short time, and then become irremediably corrupt. And he learned from Augustine that the church on earth contains both "beautiful red grain" and tares. Muentzer's innovation lay in his fusion of these writers' ideas into a single revolutionary program, which none of them would have accepted. He argued that the time had come to reverse the long process of corruption. Harvest time had come. Those who shared his vision must now take up their sickles and destroy the tares.

The Bible, though, also mattered deeply. It provided Muentzer's formal theology and much of his violent rhetoric. It offered him patterns for right action in the present and the future, from the example of the Jewish prophets who had also had visions and denounced sin to the example of the Jewish kings Jeh[illegible] and Josiah, who had smashed the idols in the high places and purified Israel.

The covenant that the latter swore with the people of Israel provided the model for the covenant that bound the members of Muentzer's Eternal League. The fact that Muentzer's vision was basically theological in framework and largely biblical in language, as Friesen plausibly argues, helps to explain why social revolution played a minor role in his thought, why he was perfectly willing to

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have noblemen as well as peasants join him and even thought that they might retain some privileges after the final victory. Ancient Israel, after all, was holy but hardly egalitarian, and that was his model of a holy society. His attack on privilege was a means, not an end.

Muentzer's appetite for texts was powerful. He consumed spurious works as eagerly as genuine ones, late treatises as hungrily as books of the Bible. Many of these works are hardly the ones we would now rely on—or even those that we might expect to matter most to an intellectual of Muentzer's time and place. And even when he read texts that still appeal to us, he did not do so as a sober scholar seeking to understand but as a desperate radical, expelled from pulpit after pulpit and threatened with hunger and privation, seeking to appropriate.

His readings of the Church Fathers Eusebius and Augustine, for example, turned two pillars of society as it was, two opponents of eschatology and revolution, into supporters of his own eschatological radicalism. Eusebius used the genre of world history to show that the date of the Second Coming could not be predicted. Augustine used the parable of wheat and tares to explain why the city of man could never be wholly pure. Eusebius's anti-radical history and Augustine's anti-radical parable became in Muentzer's hands a call to immediate purification of the church—exactly what Augustine's opponents, the Donatists, had demanded. But the very strangeness and distortions in Muentzer's commentaries, as Friesen describes them, support Friesen's reconstruction of them. After all, we should expect a past intellectual's vision of the more distant past to seem a very foreign country.

Friesen's arguments have received striking partial confirmation from a very different sort of evidence, mobilized by a very different sort of scholar. The German scholar Ulrich Bubenheimer has recently published a vastly detailed study that adduces new evidence of every kind, much of it archival and manuscript, to shed a glaring new light on the obscure recesses of Muentzer's early life. He, too, argues that Muentzer began as and remained a serious reader, a dedicated and proficient commentator. From Wittenberg—where he heard a humanist lecture on Saint Jerome—to Frankenhausen, Muentzer read as a scholar, profoundly, in detail, and under his own steam. He took basic elements of his radical system from such unexpectedly scholarly sources as the *Institutio oratoria* of Quintilian. The archives have yielded up a portion of their secrets; and they turn out to be, in general, very much what Friesen had divined by analysis of the published texts. For all their divergences in method and results, Friesen and Bubenheimer converge in renewing our image of the Reformation radical. The modern world was evidently not the first stage on which the alienated scholar played the role of opponent to that which exists.

Questions remain. One would like to know more about Muentzer's relations with women. A female cook read Tauler with him, and others apparently did more—at least to judge from the letter of a nun named Ursula, who asked if Muentzer had "learned from Tauler or Suso or read in their writings" that it was right for him to buy presents for "pretty girls." The spirituality of later medieval women, as Caroline Bynum and others have shown, was often exuberantly speculative and sometimes flamboyantly independent of church authority. One wonders what influence these women had on Muentzer's theological thought experiments.

One would also like a deeper understanding of Muentzer's relation to texts. He was very much a man of the book, one who cultivated booksellers, printers, and peddlers in order to get his own message out and receive those of others. He quoted texts in his sermons as profusely as a modern law professor writing about torts in a law review. But he also insisted, over and over again, that religious authority came from experience, not exegesis. Only prophets like Daniel (and Muentzer) could see and tell the truth, and they did not need the Bible when they did so, since they could rely on visions and other direct revelations. "A man," Muentzer told the Dukes of Saxony in a famous sermon, "must have understanding of dreams." A mere scholar, by contrast, would know nothing about God "even if he has swallowed a hundred thousand Bibles." Luther singled out Muentzer's spurning of biblical authority as basic to his larger heresy. Yet Muentzer never ceased quoting and explaining the sacred texts that—according to Luther—he dismissed as "bibble, babble, bubble."

Neither Friesen nor Bubenheimer fully explains the spiralling dialectics of Muentzer's attitude toward authority, his apparently contradictory assessments of written and experiential revelations. But that limitation may be reasonable. The same tensions and contradictions, after all, appeared often enough in early Christian heretics and have reappeared in modern users of revolutionary scriptures. They, too, have often built their faiths (in "socialism in one country," for example) on texts that they radically altered or reinterpreted as circumstances dictated. Perhaps this puzzling double use of authority, at once reverential and exploitative, is central to the Western tradition of radicalism. If so, no monograph on a single person and time will explain it in a deep way.

ANTHONY GRAFTON is Andrew Mellon Professor of History at Princeton University and the author most recently of *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800* (Harvard University Press).

CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 8*

Lafayette Park for clichés. His piece closed with an absurd judgment by conservative wag George Weigel contending that America's war policy "meets every one of the criteria these [protesters] have urged on us." If the allies' decade of arming, funding, and coddling Saddam Hussein prior to our bombing his country makes for a "just war," then I suppose that TNR will be cheerleading for an air war over Damascus in 2001.

PETER DYKSTRA
Washington, D.C.

The writer is media director of Greenpeace USA.

Political maneuver

To the editors:

I found Michael Levenson's recent article on Harold Pinter's descent into politically correct oblivion ("Sentimental Education," February 11) interesting and sympathetic, but Mr. Levenson's contention that Mr. Pinter's current troubles stem from his inability to reconcile his politics and his aesthetics seems fundamentally wrong.

Indeed, this seems more like a case of someone trying to make his politics stand in for his aesthetics. To be blunt, it looks as if Mr. Pinter hit some sort of artistic dead end in the late 1970s and instead of cracking up or killing himself like many writers in his position (and of his singular talent), he took to politics, much the way that some South American priests do when they lose their faith. And just as the priests are helped along in their mental charades by the presence of some sort of political bully-boy who stomps all over the peasants, Mr. Pinter had Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan to excoriate, vessels for the passion that he used to put into his writing. No doubt the slightly philistine tone of the decade helped to keep his outrage working overtime as well.

MATTHEW PATTON
St. Petersburg, Florida

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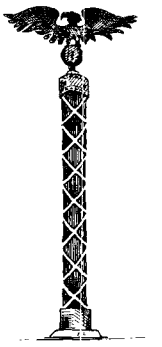
WASHINGTON DIARIST

True stories

PERHAPS THE MOST TELLING CULtural document of this war for the restoration of American innocence is the first issue of the downsized *Life* magazine—the "In Time of War" edition. During World War II *Life* was the visual equivalent of all the television networks wrapped in one. But it expired in 1972, during the "bad war," just when peace was not at hand. Now another "good war" has conjured it back to its former frequency. The very first picture in the new version is a Larry Burrows photograph from 1966 depicting four Marines in Vietnam straining to carry a wounded buddy through waves of tall grass. The wounded soldier's head is tilted back; his eyes, facing upward, are closed—Christ carried from the cross.

THE VIETNAM WAR NEVER HAD a particular beginning, and it felt endless. It didn't invade our minds, it infiltrated them. It snuck up on us, and when we awoke from it we had lost (among other things) our innocence. By contrast, the Gulf war has been transparent. The briefest real war we've fought, shorter in duration than the three-month-long "splendid little" Spanish-American War, it has had a definite beginning, middle, and end. It seems easy to understand: even though President Bush is at a loss to explain the "new world order," the undiluted evil of Saddam Hussein provides a motive that needs no concept. But *Life* proposes to explain that the war is about more than an abstraction that an inarticulate president can't express or about the Saddam menace. It is, according to an editor's note, about "the American soul"—a vision of ourselves. The cover features a blond boy in saddle shoes with wide blue eyes, clutching a flag and looking skyward. A light from above (coming from the logo) bathes his face in radiance. He is being touched by a divine force—the *Life* force. Inside, a two-page photo shows 2,500 worshipers at the sun-drenched evangelical Crystal Cathedral in suburban Southern California. On a gigantic TV monitor suspended above the congregation, an eight-year-old cherub sings the national anthem as he faces an even more gigantic sixty-by-ninety-foot flag, "unfurled at the end of every service since the Sunday before we went to war." Another spread features kindergarten children with upraised faces reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. These glowing youngsters "worry about the name of their hometown"—Bagdad, Arizona.

THE ORDINARY AMERICANS PRESented here as archetypes seem superficially to be residents of a sentimental wartime edition of *Our Town*. But the details come less from Thornton Wilder than from Sherwood Anderson. *Life*'s all-Americans are suffocated by circumstance, hellbent on escape. They are what Anderson called "grotesques," and, like the residents of Winesburg, Ohio, their representativeness may lie in their very American strangeness. There is Army Specialist Melissa Rathbun Nealy, 20, from Grand Rapids, Michigan, the first woman MIA. " 'Cocky.' 'Bubbly.' 'Full of life.' Those are the first words her parents chose to describe the way they see her now." She is the only child of a former nun and a seminarian. She grew up in a black neighborhood. "If you heard her voice on the phone," her mother is quoted as saying, "you would never know she was white." She joined the high school ROTC to be with her best friend, LaTanua, but quit, hating it. Then she joined the Army to be with LaTanua and a boyfriend. Melissa didn't want to be "left home alone." She broke up with the boyfriend, married, divorced, and got a new boyfriend in short order. Then she was captured by Saddam's troops.



BILL KEDROWSKI, 20, FROM SUBurban Minneapolis, strikes a jaunty pose in his helmet, with his shirt unbuttoned. His father, Rick, stares impassively into the camera. Dad is a Vietnam veteran being treated for post-traumatic stress disorder. At 18, "Crash" Kedrowski joined the Army "to stay out of jail," killed twenty-one Vietnamese, and sent his parents the pictures of the corpses to get even with them. Rick never told his children about his war experiences. Bill joined the Marines as a rebellion to get "out of his father's house." He escaped to the front lines.

HUNTER AND JEFFREY, BRIDE AND groom, beam under the crossed swords of the Marine Honor Guard. Hunter Bobo (named by her mother for a contestant on "The Match Game"), 21, a secretary in Pontiac, Michigan, wrote a letter to "Any Serviceman." Sergeant Jeffrey Kolster, 25, self-described as "drunk, with a different woman every night," answered. They wrote each other every day, and after a two-day visit decided to marry. To please her, he declared himself born again as a Pentecostalist. They have a puppy named Stripe.

IN CAROLINA, NEW YORK, TWO women, Barbara Kone and Sandy Clary, stalwart war mothers, are tying yellow ribbons on every house and fence in town. Barbara's son is in the reserves, Sandy's is on the Kuwaiti border. Neither woman believes in the war. Barbara even calls herself an "isolationist." Her husband, a Vietnam veteran, views the war through his self-pity: "I don't want to see these kids' families go through my agony—the thinking that nobody cares." Hanging the yellow ribbons is a rite of solace.

THE ONLY IMAGE IN 'LIFE' THAT captures the popular image of the war as heroic is an advertisement for a movie, *Backdraft*, about firemen, coming this summer. "Silently behind a door, it waits." (Saddam?) "One breath of oxygen and it explodes in a deadly rage. In that instant it can create a hero. . . ." A man in silhouette is fearlessly walking into a fiery inferno. With his conviction, this featureless figure resembles none of the real people depicted in *Life*, who are caught up in conflicts that are opaque to them, of which the war is one.

THESE ARE THE HEROES WHO serve to provide a national release from the bad war and the climax we were unable to participate in at the end of the cold war. When the evil empire collapsed into the evil dictator, we lived out the triumph in another place. At last we could lead the posse as we never could against the other nuclear superpower. *Life*'s war heroes have not been swept into the backdraft of the war because they were trying to repair the national psyche, though *Life* has cast their inadvertence as innocence. What will happen when the drama of war is over and the desert set is rolled up and stored away? But the war has been so short. The meanings won't be so ready-made if *Life* publishes an "in time of peace" edition.

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So next time you're flying to Australia and the South Pacific, call your travel agent or Qantas.

We may not look it, but we've been preparing for your trip a very long time.

QANTAS *THE SPIRIT OF AUSTRALIA*

*American Airlines reserves the right to change the AAdvantage program without notice.

In the U.S. call 1-800-227-4500.

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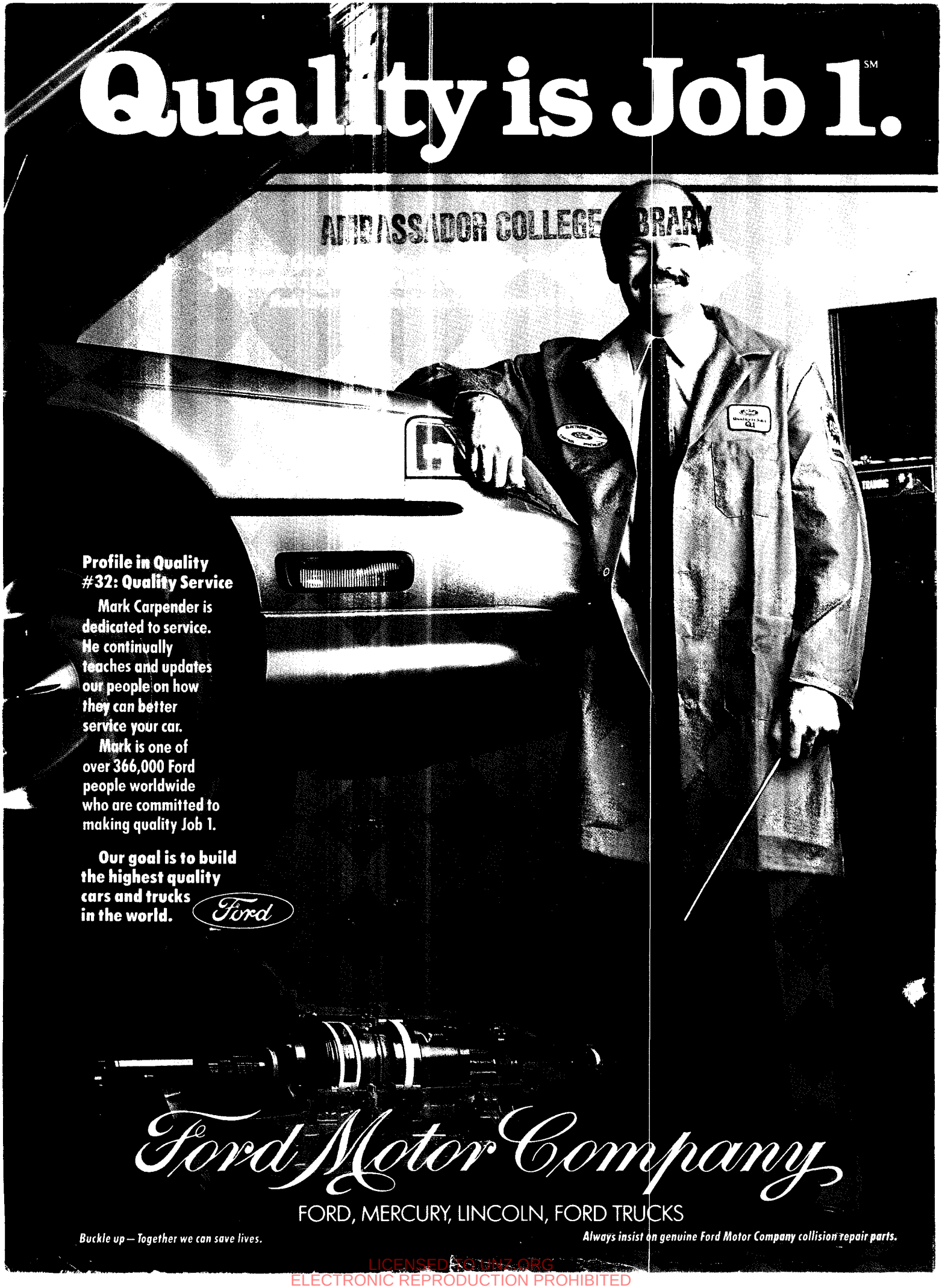
Quality is Job 1.[SM]



Profile in Quality #32: Quality Service

Mark Carpender is dedicated to service. He continually teaches and updates our people on how they can better service your car.

Mark is one of over 366,000 Ford people worldwide who are committed to making quality Job 1.

Our goal is to build the highest quality cars and trucks in the world.

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Buckle up—Together we can save lives.

Always insist on genuine Ford Motor Company collision repair parts.

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